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"THE THIRD GUEST": a New thriller by B. TRAVEN
author of "TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE"

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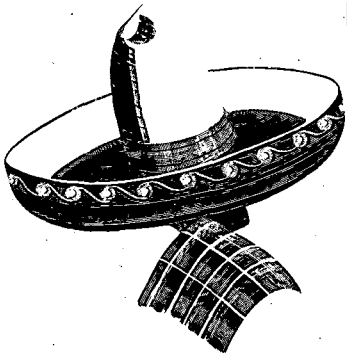

B. TRAVEN:

Editor's Note: B. Traven is probably the most mysterious literary figure since Ambrose Bierce disappeared into Mexico many years ago. He has been variously described: from "a leper forced to live apart from the rest of the world to a disillusioned American Negro." Even his agent knows only that he lives in Mexico, and that his books have sold millions of copies in many languages. His literary accomplishments, however, are easily identified. He usually writes with a savagely bitter pen, coloring the pages with an occasional broad stroke of humor. "The Third Guest" is an excellent example of his unique talent.

BILLY ROSE:

"I was born on the lower East Side of New York City. My major writing chore, a newspaper column called 'Pitching Horseshoes,' got itself pretty well spread around the world. I think its success was due to the fact that it served up popcorn and pink lemonade in a way a lot of people liked. The column will be rolling again before long and I hope my clip-clop style and rag-tag rhetoric will again meet with favor."

SHIRLEY JACKSON:

"To date I have three books and three children, although I hope eventually to have more books than children. I sold my first story in 1941; since then have been writing novels, stories, and P.T.A. programs. My husband is Stanley Edgar Hyman and we live in a big house in North Bennington, Vermont, and love it. I like cats and dogs and children and books and painting and writing and black magic. I hate housework and laundry, but do both because no one else will. I like to play poker and bridge too, and I wish I didn't have to write this autobiography."

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Fantastic

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THE THIRD GUEST

By B. TRAVEN

Homo Sapiens comes up with some pretty weird symbols for happiness. The guy next door is all in a sweat over getting a musical horn for his car; Mrs. H'wamoo, seventh wife of an African chief, can't rest until she gets that new ring for her nose. Foolishness! Happiness comes from within, from peace of mind and lofty ideals. (Of course, we're miserable without an electric typewriter, but that's different.) B. Traven, the man nobody knows (see inside cover), here tells the story of a simple Mexican woodchopper whose dream of happiness was to eat an entire roast turkey, sharing it with nobody. One day his dream came true . . . and the resulting complications make for great fantasy, as well as forming one of the most searching commentaries on human nature we've ever read.

Illustrator: Tom O'Sullivan

MACARIO, the village woodchopper, had one overwhelming desire which he had nourished for fifteen years.

It was not riches he wanted, nor a well-built house instead of that ramshackle old hut in which he lived with his wife and his eleven children who wore rags and were always hungry. What he craved more than anything in this world — what he might have traded his very soul for — was to have a roast turkey all for himself combined with the opportunity to

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eat it in peace, deep in the woods unseen by his ever-hungry children, and entirely alone.

His stomach never fully satisfied, he would leave home before sunrise every morning in the year, weekday and Sunday alike, rain or shine. He would disappear into the woods and by nightfall bring back a load of chopped wood carried on his back.

That load, meaning a full day's job, would sell for one bit, sometimes even less than that. During the rainy season, though, when competition was slow, he would get as much as two bits now and then for his load of fuel.

Two bits meant a fortune to his wife, who looked even more starved than her husband, and who was known in the village as the Woman with the Sad Eyes.

Arriving home after sunset, Macario would throw off his pack with a heavy groan, stagger into his hut and drop with an audible bump upon a low crudely-made chair brought to the equally crude table by one of the children.

There he would spread both his arms upon the table and say with a tired voice: "Oh, Mother, I am tired and hungry, what have we for supper?"

"Black beans, green chile, tortillas, salt and lemon tea," his wife would answer.

It was always the same menu with no variation whatever. Knowing the answer long before he was home, he merely asked so as to say something and, by so doing, prevent his children from believing him merely a dumb animal.

When supper was set before him in earthen vessels, he would be profoundly asleep. His wife would shake him: "Father, supper's on the table."

"We thank our good Lord for what he allows us poor sinners," he would pray, and immediately start eating.

Yet hardly would he swallow a few mouthfuls of beans when he would note the eyes of his children resting on his face and hands, watching him that he might not eat too much so that they might get a little second helping since the first had been so very small. He would cease eating and drink only the tea, brewed of *zacate de limon*, sweetened with a little chunk of *piloncillo*.

Having emptied the earthen pot he would, with the back of his hand, wipe his mouth, moan pitifully, and in a prayerful voice say: "Oh, dear Lord in heaven, if only once in all my dreary life I could have a roast turkey all for myself, I would then die happily and rest in peace until called for the final reckoning, Amen."

Frequently he would not say that much, yet he would never fail to say at least: "Oh, good Lord, if only once I could have a roast turkey all for myself."

His children had heard that

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lamentation so often that none of them paid attention to it any longer, considering it their father's particular way of saying Grace after supper.

He might just as well have prayed that he would like to be given one thousand doubloons, for there was not the faintest likelihood that he would ever come into the possession of roast chicken, let alone a heavy roast turkey whose meat no child of his had ever tasted.

His wife, the most faithful and the most abnegating companion a man would wish for, had every reason to consider him a very good man. He never beat her; he worked as hard as any man could. On Saturday nights only he would take a three-centavo's worth nip of mezcal; and no matter how little money she had, she would never fail to buy him that squeeze of a drink. She would buy it at the general store because he would get less than half the size for the same money if he bought the drink in the village tavern.

Realizing how good a husband he was, how hard he worked to keep the family going, how much he, in his own way, loved her and the children, the wife began saving up any penny she could spare of the little money she earned doing odd jobs for other villagers who were slightly better off than she was.

Having thus saved penny by penny for three long years, which had seemed to her an eternity, she at last could lay her hands on the heaviest turkey brought to the market.

Almost exploding with joy and happiness, she took it home while the children were not in. She hid the fowl so that none would see it. Not a word she said when her husband came home that night, tired, worn-out and hungry as always, and as usual praying to heaven for his roast turkey.

The children were sent to bed early. She feared not that her husband might see what she was about, for he had already fallen asleep at the table and, as always, half an hour later he would drowsily rise and drag himself to his cot upon which he would drop as if clubbed down.

If there ever was prepared a carefully selected turkey with a true feeling of happiness and profound joy guiding the hands and the taste of a cook, this one certainly was. The wife worked all through the night to get the turkey ready before sunrise.

Macario got up for his day's work and sat down at the table for his lean breakfast. He never bothered saying *Good Morning* and was not used to hearing it said by his wife or anybody in the house.

If something was amiss on the

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table or if he could not find his machete or the ropes which he needed for tying up the chopped wood, he would just mumble something, hardly opening his lips. As his utterings were few and these few always limited to what was absolutely necessary, his wife would understand him without ever making a mistake.

Now he rose, ready to leave.

He came out, and while standing for a few seconds by the door of his shack looking at the misty gray of the coming day, his wife placed herself before him as though in his way. For a brief moment he gazed at her, slightly bewildered because of that strange attitude of hers. And there she handed him an old basket in which was the roast turkey, trimmed, stuffed and garnished, all prettily wrapped up in fresh green banana leaves.

"There now, there, dear husband, there's the roast turkey you've been praying for during so many long years. Take it along with you to the deepest and densest part of the woods where nobody will disturb you and where you can eat it all alone. Hurry now before the children smell it and get aware of that precious meal, for then you could not resist giving it to them. Hurry along."

He looked at her with his tired eyes and nodded. *Please* and *Thanks* were words he never used. It did not even occur to him to let his wife have just one little bite of that turkey because his mind, not fit to handle more than one thought at a time, was at this instant exclusively occupied with his wife's urging to hurry and run away with his turkey lest the children get up before he could leave.

He took his time finding himself a well-hidden place deep in the woods and as he, because of so much wandering about, had become sufficiently hungry by now, he was ready to eat his turkey with genuine gusto. He made his seat on the ground very comfortable, washed his hands in a brook near by, and everything was as perfect as it should be at such a solemn occasion — that is, the fulfillment of a man's prayer said daily for an almost uncountable number of years.

With a sigh of utter happiness, he leaned his back against the hollow trunk of a heavy tree, took the turkey out of the basket, spread the huge banana leaves before him on the ground and laid the bird upon them with a gesture as if he were offering it to the gods. He had in mind to lie down after the meal and sleep the whole day through and so turn this day, his Saint's day, to a real holiday — the first in his life since he could think for himself.

On looking at the turkey so well prepared, and taking in that sweet aroma of a carefully and skillfully

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roasted turkey, he muttered in sheer admiration: "I must say this much of her, she's a great and wonderful cook. It is sad that she never has the chance to show her skill."

That was the most profound praise and the highest expression of thanks he could think of. His wife would have burst with pride and she would have been happy beyond words had he only once in his life said that in her presence. This, though, he would never have been able to do, for in her presence such words would simply refuse to pass his lips.

Holding the bird's breast down with his left hand, he firmly grabbed with his right one of the turkey's thick legs to tear it off.

And while he was trying to do so, he suddenly noted two feet standing right before him, hardly two yards away.

He raised his eyes up along the black, tightly fitting pants which covered low riding boots as far down as the ankles and found, to his surprise, a Charro in full dress, watching him tear off the turkey's leg.

The Charro wore a sombrero of immense size, richly trimmed with gold laces. His short leather coat was adorned with the richest gold, silver and multi-colored silk embroidery one could imagine. To the outside seams of the Charro's black trousers and reaching from the belt down to where they came to rest upon the heavy spurs of pure silver, a row of gold coins was sewn on. A slight move the Charro would make now and then while he was speaking to Macario caused these gold coins to send forth a low, sweet-sounding tinkle. He had a black moustachio, the Charro had, and a beard like a goat's. His eyes were pitch black, very narrow and piercing so that one might virtually believe them needles.

When Macario's eyes reached his face, the stranger smiled, thin-lipped and somewhat malicious. He evidently thought his smile a most charming one, by which any human, man or woman, would be enticed beyond help.

"What do you say, friend, about a fair bite of your tasty turkey for a hungry horseman," he said in a metallic voice. "See, friend, I've had a long ride all through the night and now I'm nearly starved and so, please, for hell's sake, invite me to partake of your lunch."

"It's not lunch in the first place," Macario corrected, holding on to his turkey as if he thought that bird might fly away at any moment. "And in the second place, it's my holiday dinner and I won't part with it for anybody, whoever he may be. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't. Look here, friend, I'll give you my heavy silver

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spurs just for that thick leg you've grabbed," the Charro bargained, moistening his lips with a thick dark red tongue which, had it been forked, might have been that of a snake.

"I have no use for spurs whether they are of iron, brass, silver or gold trimmed with diamonds all over, because I have no horse to ride on." Macario judged the value of his roast turkey as only a man would who had waited for that meal almost eighteen years.

"Well then, friend, if it is worth that much to you, I'll cut off all these gold coins which you see dangling from my trousers and I'll give them to you for a half breast of that turkey of yours. What about that?"

"That money would do me no good. If I spent only one single coin they'd clap me in jail right away and there torture me until I'd tell them where I stole it, and after that they'd chop off one hand of mine for being a thief. What could I, a wood chopper, do with one hand less when, in fact, I could use four if only the Lord had been kind enough to let me have that many."

Macario, utterly unconcerned over the Charro's insistence, once more tried to tear off the leg and start eating when the visitor interrupted him again: "See here, friend, I own these woods, the whole woods and all the woods around here, and I'll give you these woods in exchange for just one wing of your turkey and a fistful of the fillings. All these woods, think of it."

"Now you're lying, stranger. These woods are not yours, they're the Lord's, or I couldn't chop in here and provide the villagers with fuel. And if they were your woods and you'd give them to me for a gift or in payment for a part of my turkey, I wouldn't be any richer anyhow because I'd have to chop then just as I do now."

Said the Charro: "Now listen, my good friend —"

"Now you listen," Macario broke in impatiently. "You aren't my good friend and I'm not your good friend and I hope I never will be your good friend as long as God saves my soul. Understand that. And now go back to hell where you came from and let me eat my holiday dinner in peace."

The Charro made a horribly obscene grimace, swore at Macario and limped off, cursing the world and all mankind.

Macario looked after him, shook his head and said to himself: "Who'd expect to meet such funny jesters in these woods? Well, I suppose it takes all kinds of people and creatures to make it truly our Lord's world."

He sighed and laid his left hand on the turkey's breast as he had done before and with his right grasped one of the fowl's legs.

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And again he noted two feet standing right before him at the same spot where, only a half minute earlier, the Charro had been standing.

Ordinary huaraches, well-worn as though by a man who has wandered a long and difficult road, covered these two feet. Their owner was quite obviously very tired and weary, for his feet seemed to sag at the arches.

Macario looked up and met a very kind face, thinly bearded. The wanderer was dressed in very old, but well washed, white cotton pants and a shirt of the same stuff, and he looked not very different from the ordinary Indian peasant of the country.

The wanderer's eyes held Macario's as though by a charm and Macario became aware that in this pilgrim's heart were combined all the goodnesses and kindnesses of earth and heaven, and in each of the wanderer's eyes he saw a little golden sun, and each little golden sun seemed to be but a little golden hole through which one might crawl right into heaven and see Godfather Himself in all His glory.

With a voice that sounded like a huge organ playing from a distance far away, the wanderer said: "Give unto me, my good neighbor, as I shall give unto you. I am hungry, very hungry indeed. For see, my beloved brother, I have come a long way. Pray, let

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me have that leg which you are holding and I shall truly and verily bless you for it. Just that leg, nothing else. It will satisfy my hunger and it will give me new strength, for very long still is my way before reaching my father's house."

"You're a very kind man, wanderer, the kindest of men that ever were, that are today, and that are to come," Macario said, as though he was praying before the image of the Holy Virgin.

"So I beg of you, my good neighbor, give me just one half of the bird's breast, you certainly will not miss it much."

"Oh, my beloved pilgrim," Macario explained as if he were speaking to the archbishop whom he had never seen and did not know but whom he believed the highest of the highest on earth. "If you, my Lord, really mean to say that I won't miss it much, I shall answer that I feel terribly hurt in my soul because I can't say anything better to you, kind man, but that you are very much mistaken. I know I should never say such a thing to you for it comes close to blasphemy, yet I can't help it, I must say it even should that cost me my right to enter heaven because your eyes and your voice make me tell the truth.

"For you see, your Lordship, I must not miss even the tiniest little morsel of this turkey. This turkey, please, oh please, do understand, my Lord, was given me as a whole and was meant to be eaten as a whole. It would no longer be a whole turkey were I to give away just a little bit not even the size of a fingernail. A whole turkey — it was what I have yearned for all my life, and not to have it now after a life-time of praying for it would destroy all the happiness of my good and faithful wife who has sacrificed herself beyond words to make me that great gift. So, please, my Lord and Master, understand a poor sinner's mind. Please, I pray you, understand."

And the wanderer looked at Macario and said unto him: "I do understand you, Macario, my noble brother and good neighbor, I verily do understand you. Be blessed for ever and ever and eat your turkey in peace. I shall go now, and on passing through your village I shall go near your hut where I shall bless your good wife and all your children. Be with the Lord. Goodbye."

Not once while he had made these speeches to the Charro and to the Wanderer had it occurred to Macario, who rarely spoke more than fifty words a day, to stop to think what had made him so eloquent — why it was that he, in the depths of the woods, could speak as freely and easily as the minister in church, and used

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words and expressions which he had never known before. It all came to him without his realizing what was happening to him.

He followed the pilgrim with his eyes until he could see him no longer.

He shook his head sadly.

"I most surely feel sorry about him. He was so very tired and hungry. But I simply could do nothing else. I would have insulted my dear wife. Besides, I cannot spare a leg or part of the breast, come what may, for it would no longer be a whole turkey then."

And again he seized the turkey's leg to tear it off and start his dinner when, again, he noted two feet standing before him and at the same spot the others had stood a while ago.

These two feet were standing in old-fashioned sandals, and Macario thought that the man must be a foreigner from far-off lands, for he had never seen sandals like these before.

He looked up and stared at the hungriest face he had ever believed possible. That face had no flesh. It was all bone. And all bone were the hands and the legs of the visitor. His eyes seemed to be but two very black holes hidden deep in the fleshless face. The mouth consisted of two rows of strong teeth, bared of lips.

He was dressed in a faded bluish-white flowing mantle which, as Macario noted, was neither cotton nor silk nor wool nor any fabric he knew. He held a long staff in one hand for support.

From the stranger's belt, which was rather carelessly wound around his waist, a mahogany box, scratched all over, with a clock ticking audibly inside, was dangling on a bit of a string.

It was that box hanging there instead of the hour-glass which Macario had expected that confused him at first as to what the new visitor's social standing in the world might be.

The newcomer now spoke. He spoke with a voice that sounded like two sticks clattering one against the other.

"I am very hungry, compadre, very, very hungry."

"You don't need to tell me. I can see that, compadre," Macario asserted, not in the least afraid of the stranger's horrible appearance.

"Since you can see that and since you have no doubt that I need something substantial in my stomach, would you mind giving me that leg of the turkey you are holding?"

Macario gave forth a desperate groan, shrugged and lifted up his arms in utter helplessness.

"Well," he said, with mourning in his voice, "what can a poor mortal do against fate? I've been caught at last. There's no way out

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any more. It would have been a great adventure, the good God in heaven knows it, but fate doesn't want it that way. I shall never have a whole turkey for myself, never, never and never, so what can I do? I must give in. All right, compadre, get your belly's fill; I know what hunger is like. Sit down, hungry man, sit down. Half the turkey's yours and be welcome to it."

"Oh, compadre, that is fine, very fine," said the hungry man, sitting down on the ground opposite Macario and widening his row of teeth as if he were trying to grin.

Macario could not make out for sure what the stranger meant by that grin, whether it was an expression of thanks or a gesture of joy at having been saved from a sure death by starvation.

"I'll cut the bird in two," Macario said, in a great hurry now lest another visitor might come up and make his own part a third only. "Once I've cut the bird in two, you just look the other way and I'll lay my machete flat between the two halves and you tell which half you want, that next to the edge or that next to the back. Fair enough, Bone Man?"

"Fair enough, compadre."

So they had dinner together. And a mighty jolly dinner it was, with much clever talking on the part of the guest and with much laughter on the side of the host.

"You know, compadre," Macario presently said, "at first I was slightly upset because you didn't fit in the picture of you I had in my mind. That box of mahogany with the clock in it which you carry hanging from your belt, confused me quite a bit and made it hard for me to recognize you promptly. What has become of your hour-glass, if it isn't a secret to know?"

"No secret at all, no secret at all. You may tell the world if it itches you to do so. You see, it was like this. There was a big battle in full swing somewhere around Europe, which is the fattest spot on earth for me next to China. And I tell you, compadre, that battle kept me on the run as if I were still a youngster. Hither and thither I had to dart until I went nearly mad and was exhausted entirely. So, naturally, I could not take proper care of myself as I usually do to keep me fit. Well, it seems a British cannon ball fired in the wrong direction by a half-drunken limey smashed my cherished hour-glass so completely that it could not be mended again by old smith Pluto who likes doing such odd jobs. I looked around and around everywhere, but I could not buy a satisfactory new one, since they are made no longer save for decorations on mantlepieces and, like all such silly knick-knacks, useless.

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I tried to swipe one in museums, but to my horror I discovered that they were all fakes, not a genuine instrument among them."

A chunk of tender white meat which he chewed at this instant let him forget his story for a while. Remembering that he had started to tell something without finishing it, he now asked: "Oh, well, where was I with my tale, compadre?"

"The hour-glasses in all the museums were all fakes wherever you went to try one out."

"Right. Yes, now isn't it a pity that they build such wonderful great museums around things which are only fakes? Coming back to the point: there I was without a correctly adjusted hour-glass, and many mistakes were bound to happen. Then it came to pass not long afterwards that I visited a captain sitting in his cabin of a ship that was rapidly sinking away under him and with the crew all off in boats. He, the captain I mean, having refused to leave his ship, had hoisted the Union Jack and was stubbornly sticking by his ship whatever might happen to her, as would become a loyal British captain. There he now sat in his cabin, writing up his log-book.

"When he saw me right before him, he smiled at me and said: 'Well, Mr. Bone Man — Sir, I mean, seems my time is up.' 'It is, skipper,' I confirmed, also smiling to make it easier for him and make him forget the dear ones he would leave behind. He looked at his chronometer and said: 'Please, sir, just allow me fifteen seconds more to jot down the actual time in my log-book.' 'Granted,' I answered. And he was all happiness that he could write in the correct time. Seeing him so very happy, I said: 'What about it, Cap'n, would you mind giving me your chronometer? I reckon you can spare it now since you won't have any use for it any longer, because aboard the ship you will sail from now on you won't have to worry about time at all. You see, Cap'n, as a matter of fact my hour-glass was smashed by a British cannon ball fired by a drunken British gunner in the wrong direction, and so I think it only fair and just that I should have in exchange for my hour-glass a British-made chronometer.'"

"Oh, so that's what you call that funny-looking little clock — a chronometer. I didn't know that," Macario broke in.

"Yes, that's what it is called," the hungry man admitted with a grin of his bared teeth. "The only difference is that a chronometer is a hundred times more exact in telling the correct time than an ordinary watch or a clock. Well, compadre, where was I?"

"You asked the ship's master for the chro . . ."

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". . . nometer. Exactly. So when I asked him to let me have that pretty time-piece he said: 'Now, you are asking for just the very thing, for it happens that this chronometer is my personal property and I can dispose of it any way it damn pleases me. If it were the company's I would have to deny you that beautiful companion of mine. It was perfectly adjusted a few days before we went on this rather eventful voyage and I can assure you, Mr. Bone Man, that you can rely on this instrument a hundred times better than on any of your old-fashioned glasses.' So I took it with me on leaving the rapidly sinking ship. And that's how I came to carry this chronometer instead of that shabby out-dated hour-glass I used to have in bygone days.

"And I can tell you one thing, compadre, this British-made gadget works so perfectly that, since I got hold of it, I have never yet missed a single date, whereas before that many a man for whom the coffin or the basket or an old sack had already been brought into the house, escaped me. And I tell you, compadre, escaping me is bad business for everybody concerned, and I lose a good lot of my reputation whenever something of this sort happens. But it won't happen anymore now."

So they talked, told one another jokes, dry ones and juicy ones, laughed a great deal together, and felt as jolly as old friends meeting each other after a long separation.

The Bone Man certainly liked the turkey, and he said a huge amount of good words in praise of the wife who had cooked the bird so tastily.

Entirely taken in by that excellent meal he, now and then, would become absent-minded and forget himself, and try to lick his lips which were not there with a tongue which he did not have.

But Macario understood that gesture and regarded it as a sure and unmistakable sign that his guest was satisfied and happy in his own unearthly way.

"You have had two visitors before today, or have you?" the Bone Man asked in the course of their conversation.

"True. How did you know, compadre?"

"How I know? I have to know what is going on around the world. You see, I am the chief of the secret police of — of — well, you know the Big Boss. I am not allowed to mention His name. Did you know them — those two visitors, I mean?"

"Sure I did. What do you think I am, a heathen?"

"The first one was what we call our main trouble."

"The devil, I knew him all right," Macario said confidently.

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"That fellow can come to me in any disguise and I'd know him anywhere. This time he tried looking like a Charro, but smart as he thinks he is, he had made a few mistakes in dressing up, as foreigners are apt to do. So it wasn't hard for me to see that he was a counterfeit Charro."

"Why didn't you give him a small piece of your turkey then, since you knew who he was. That hop-about-the-world can do you a great deal of harm, you know."

"Not to me, compadre. I know all his tricks and he won't get me. Why should I give him part of my turkey? He had so much money that he had not pockets enough to put it in and so had to sew it outside on his pants. At the next inn he passes he can buy if he wishes a half dozen roast turkeys and a couple of young roast pigs besides. He didn't need a leg or a wing of my turkey."

"But the second visitor was — well, you know Whom I refer to. Did you recognize Him?"

"Who wouldn't? I am a Christian. I would know him anywhere. I felt awfully sorry that I had to deny Him a little bite, for I could see that He was very hungry and terribly in need of some food. But who am I, poor sinner, to give our Lord a little part of my turkey. His father owns the whole world and all the birds because He made everything. He may give His Son as many roast turkeys as the Son wants to eat. What is more, our Lord, who can feed five thousand hungry people with two fishes and five ordinary loaves of bread all during the same afternoon, and satisfy their hunger and have still a few dozens of sacks full of crumbs left over — well, compadre, I thought that He Himself can feed well on just one little leaf of grass if He is really hungry. I would have considered it a really grave sin giving Him a leg of my turkey. And another thing, He Who can turn water into wine just by saying so, can just as well cause that little ant walking here on the ground and picking up a tiny morsel, to turn into a roast turkey with all the fillings and trimmings and sauces known in heaven.

"Who am I, a poor woodchopper with eleven brats to feed, to humiliate our Lord by making Him accept a leg of my roast turkey touched with my unclean hands? I am a faithful son of the church, and as such I must respect the power and might and dignity of our Lord."

"That's an interesting philosophy, compadre," the Bone Man said. "I can see that your mind is strong, and that your brain functions perfectly in the direction of that human virtue which is strongly concerned with safeguarding one's property."

"I've never heard of that,

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compadre." Macario's face was a blank.

"The only thing that baffles me now is your attitude toward me, compadre." The Bone Man was cleaning up a wing bone with his strong teeth as he spoke. "What I would like to hear is why did you give me half of your turkey when just a few minutes before you had denied as little as a leg or a wing to the devil and also to our Lord?"

"Ah," Macario exclaimed, throwing up both his hands to emphasize the exclamation. And "Ah," he said once more, "that's different; with you that's very different. For one thing, I'm a human being and I know what hunger is and how it feels to be starved. Besides, I've never heard as yet that you have any power to create or to perform miracles. You're just an obedient servant of the Supreme Judge. Nor have you any money to buy food with, for you have no pockets in your clothes. It's true I had the heart to deny my wife a bite of that turkey which she prepared for me with all her love put in for extra spices. I had the heart because, lean as she is, she doesn't look one-tenth as hungry as you do. I was able to put up enough will power to decline my poor children, always crying for food, a few morsels of my roast turkey. Yet, no matter how hungry my children are, none of them looks one-hundredth as hungry as you do."

"Now, compadre, come, come. Don't try to sell me that," the dinner guest clattered, making visible efforts to smile. "Out with the truth. I can bear it. You said, 'For one thing' when you started explaining. Now tell me the other thing as well. I can stand the truth."

"All right then," Macario said quietly. "You see, compadre, I realized the very moment I saw you standing before me that I would not have any time left to eat as little as one leg, let alone the whole turkey. So I said to myself, as long as he eats too, I will be able to eat, and so I made it fifty-fifty."

The visitor turned his deep eye-holes in great surprise upon his host. Then he started grinning and soon he broke into a thundering laughter which sounded like heavy clubs drumming a huge empty barrel. "By the great Jupiter, compadre, you are a shrewd one, indeed you are. I cannot remember having met such a clever and quick-witted man for a long time. You deserve, you truly and verily deserve to be selected by me for a little service, a little service which will make my lonely existence now and then less boresome to me. You see, compadre, I like playing jokes on men now and then as my mood

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will have it. Jokes that don't hurt anybody, and they amuse me and help me to feel that my job is, somehow, less unproductive, if you know what I mean."

"I guess I know how you mean it."

"Do you know what I am going to do so as to pay honestly for the dinner you offered me?"

"What, compadre? Oh, please, sir, your lordship, don't make me your assistant. Not that, please, anything else you wish, but not your helper."

"I don't need an assistant and I have never had one. No, I have another idea. I shall make you a doctor, a great doctor who will outwit all those haughty learned physicians and super-specialists who are always playing their nasty little tricks with the idea that they can put one over on me. That's what I am going to do: make you a doctor. And I promise you that your roast turkey shall be paid for a million-fold."

Speaking thus he rose, walked some twenty feet away, looked searchingly at the ground, at that time of the year dry and sandy, and called back: "Compadre, bring your *guaje* bottle over here. Yes, I mean that bottle of yours which looks as though it were of some strange variety of pumpkin. But first pour out all the water which is still in it."

Macario obeyed and came close to where his guest waited for him. The visitor spat seven times upon the dry ground, remained quiet for a few minutes and then, all of a sudden, crystal-clear water sputtered out of that sandy soil.

"Hand me your bottle," the Bone Man said.

He knelt down by the little pool just forming and with one hand spooned up the water and poured it into Macario's *guaje* bottle. This procedure took quite some time, for the mouth of the bottle was extremely small.

When the bottle, which held about a quart, was full, the Bone Man, still kneeling by the pool, tapped the soil with one hand and the water immediately disappeared from view.

"Let's go back to our eating place, compadre," the visitor suggested.

Once more they sat down together. The Bone Man handed Macario the bottle. "This liquid in your bottle will make you the greatest doctor known in the present century. One drop of this fluid will cure any sickness, and I include any sickness known as a fatal and as an incurable one. But mind, and mind well, compadre, once the last drop is gone, there will be no more of that medicine and your curing power will exist no longer."

Macario was not at all excited over that great gift. "I don't know if I should take that present

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from you. You see, compadre, I've been happy in my own way. True it is that I've been hungry always all through my life; always I've been tired, always been struggling with no end in view. Yet that's the way with people in my position. We accept that life because it was given us. It's for that reason that we feel happy in our way — because we always try making the best of something very bad and apparently hopeless. This turkey we ate together today has been the very peak of my life's ambition. I never wanted to go up higher in all my desires than to have one roast turkey with all the trimmings and fillings all for myself, and be allowed to eat it in peace and all alone with no hungry children's eyes counting every little bite going into my hungry stomach."

"That's just why. You didn't have your roast turkey all by yourself. You gave me half of it, and so your life's ambition is still not accomplished."

"You know, compadre, that I had no choice in that matter."

"I suppose you are right. Anyway, whatever the reason, your one and only desire in this world has not yet been satisfied. You must admit that. So, if you wish to buy another turkey without waiting for it another fifteen or twenty years, you will have to cure somebody to get the money with which to buy that turkey."

"I never thought of that," Macario muttered, as if speaking to himself. "I surely must have a whole roast turkey all for myself, come what may, or I'll die a most unhappy man."

"Of course, compadre, there are a few more things which you ought to know before we part for a while."

"Yes, what is it, tell me."

"Wherever you are called to a patient you will see me there also."

On hearing that, unprepared as he was for the catch, Macario got the shivers.

"Don't get frightened, compadre, no one else will see me; and mind you well what I am going to tell you now. If you see me standing at your patient's feet, just put one drop of your medicine into a cup or glass of fresh water, make him drink it, and before two days are gone he will be all right again, sane and sound for a good long time to come."

"I understand," Macario nodded pensively.

"But if," the Bone Man continued, "you see me standing at your patient's head, do not use the medicine; for if you see me standing thus, he will die no matter what you do and regardless of how many brilliant doctors attempt to snatch him away from me. In that case do not use the medicine I gave you because it

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will be wasted and be only a loss to you. You must realize, compadre, that this divine power to select the one that has to leave the world — while some other, be he old or a scoundrel, shall continue on earth — this power of selection I cannot transfer to a human being who may err or become corrupt. That's why the final decision in each particular case must remain with me, and you must obey and respect my selection."

"I won't forget that, sir," Macario answered.

"You had better not. Well, now, compadre, let us say good-bye. The dinner was excellent; exquisite I should call it, if you understand that word. I must admit, and I admit it with great pleasure, that I have had an enjoyable time in your company. By all means, that dinner you gave me will restore my strength for another hundred years. Would that when my need for another meal is as urgent as it was today, I may find as generous a host as you have been. Much obliged, compadre. A thousand thanks. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, compadre."

Macario spoke as though he were waking from a heavy dream, yet immediately he realized that he had not been dreaming.

Before him on the ground were the well-picked bones of that half turkey which his guest had eaten with so much delight.

Mechanically he cleaned up all the morsels which had dropped and stuffed them into his mouth, so that nothing should be wasted, all the while trying to find the meaning of the several adventures that were crammed into the limited space of his mind.

The thing most difficult for him to understand was how it had been possible for him to talk so much and talk what he believed was very clever as, in his opinion, only a learned man could do. But then he knew that when in the woods he always had very clever thoughts; only at home in the presence of his wife and children he had no thoughts whatever and his mouth was as if glued and it cost him much labor to get out of it one full sentence.

Soon he got tired and presently lay down under a tree to sleep the rest of the day, as he had promised himself that he would after his holiday dinner.

No fuel did he bring back that night.

His wife had not a red cent in the house with which to buy food the next day.

Yet she did not reproach him for having been lazy, as in fact she never criticized anything he did or did not. The truth was that she felt immensely happy to be alive. For, during the day, and about noon, when she was busy in the yard washing the children's

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rags, a strange golden ray which, so it appeared, came not from the sun, but from an unknown source, had touched her whole body, while at the same time she had heard inside her heart a sweet music as if played by a huge organ from far, far above the earth.

From that moment on and all the whole day she had felt as though lifted from the ground, and her mind had been at peace as she could not remember having ever felt before. Nothing of this phenomenon did she tell her husband. She kept it to herself like a very sacred property all her own.

When she served supper there was still some reflection of that golden ray visible on her face.

Even her husband noted it on giving her a casual glance. But he said nothing, for he was still heavily occupied with his own fortunes of the day.

Before he went to sleep that night, later than usual, for he had slept well during the day out in the woods, his wife asked him timidly: "How was the turkey, dear husband?"

"What do you think was the matter with it since you ask me how it was? What do you mean? Was there something wrong with it? It was quite all right as far as I could judge, with the little experience I've had eating roast turkey."

With not a single word did he mention his visitors.

When he had turned about to go to his cot, she looked at him, watching his face sidewise and thoughtfully. Something was new in him, something had come over him. Never before had he talked that much to her at one breath.

Next day was a hungry one for the whole family. Their breakfast, including that of Macario's, was always lean. Yet this morning his wife had to make it smaller still, for it had to be stretched into two more meals.

Soon Marcario was through with the few mouthfuls of black beans seasoned with green chile and a pot of *atole* for a drink. Complain he did not because he realized that the blame was on him.

He took up his machete, his ax and his ropes and stepped out into the misty morning.

Considering the way he went about his usual hard task of chopping wood, he might as well have forgotten about the precious medicine and all that went with it.

Only a few paces had he gone when his wife called after him: "Husband, your water bottle."

This reminded him like a flash that the whole adventure of the day before might after all not have been a dream but reality. Last night, on thinking of the happenings, he had reached the

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conclusion that it might have been but sort of an imagination caused by a stomach not used to being filled up by a half roast turkey.

"It's still full of water," the wife said, bringing the *guaje* bottle out and shaking it. "Shall I pour the old water out and put in fresh water?" she asked, while playing with the cork cut from a corn cob.

"Yes, I know, woman, it's still full," Macario answered, not a bit afraid that his wife might be too hasty and spill the miraculous liquid away. "Yesterday I drank from the little brook. Just give me the bottle full as it is. The water is good; I got it out there in the woods."

On his way to work and some fair distance away from his hut which was the last at this side of the village, he hid the bottle in the dense brushes, partly covering it with soil.

That night he brought home one of the biggest loads of heavy fine dry fuel such as he had not delivered for many months. It was sold at three bits, a price unheard of, and was sold that same night on the first call the older boy made. So the family felt like having come into a million.

Next day Macario went about his job as usual.

On the night before he had told his wife casually that he had broken his *guaje* bottle because a heavy trunk had dropped upon it, and she had to give him another one of the several they kept in the house. These bottles cost them nothing, for the older boys discovered them growing wild in the bush somewhere.

Again he brought home that night a good load of chopped wood, yet this time he found his family in a pitiful distress.

His wife, her face swollen, her eyes red from long crying, rushed at him the moment he came in. "Reginito is dying, my poor little baby, Regino, will be gone in a half hour," and she broke into a heart-breaking lamentation, tears streaming down her face.

Helplessy and stupidly he looked at her the way he always looked if something in the house happened which was out of the gloomy routine by which this home of his was run. When his wife stepped aside, he noted that there were present several neighbors, all women, partly standing, partly squatting close to the cot on which the child had been bedded.

His was the poorest family in the village, yet they were among the best liked for their questions, their honesty, their modesty, and because of that unearned virtue that the poor are always liked better than the rich anywhere and by everybody.

Those women, in their neighborly zeal to help the so very poor Macario, and on hearing of the

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child's being sick, had brought with them all sorts of herbs, roots, bits of bark as used by the villagers in cases of sickness. The village had no doctor and no drug store and for that reason, perhaps, it also had no undertaker.

Every woman had brought a different kind of medicinal herb or remedy. And every one of the women made a different suggestion as to what should be done to save the child. For hours that little creature had been tortured with scores of different treatments and had been given teas brewed from roots, herbs and ground snake-bones mixed with a powder obtained from charred toads.

"He ate too much," one woman said, seeing his father coming to the child's bed.

"His bowels are all twisted up, there's no help," another one corrected the first one.

"Wrong, compadre, it's an infection of the stomach, he is done for."

The one next to her observed: "We've done everything possible, he can't live another hour. One of our kids died the same way. I know it. I can see by his little shrunken face that he is winged already for his flight to heaven, little angel, poor little angel." She broke into a loud sob.

Not in the least minding the women's chatter, Macario looked at his little son whom he seemed to love best of all as he was the youngest of the bunch. He liked his innocent smile and felt happy in his way when the little tyke would now and then sit on his lap for a few minutes and play with his tiny fingers upon the man's face. Often it occurred to Macario that the only reason for being alive rested with the fact that there always would be a little baby around the house, smiling at him innocently and beating his nose and cheeks with his little fists.

The child was dying; no doubt of that. The mirror held by a woman before the baby's mouth showed no mark of breath. His heartbeat could practically no longer be noted by one or the other woman who would press her ear upon the child's chest.

The father stood there and gazed at his baby without knowing whether he ought to step closer still and touch the little face or remain where he was, or say something to his wife or to one of the other women, or talk to the children who were timidly crowded into one corner of the room where they all sat as if they were guilty of the baby's misfortune. They had had no dinner and they felt sure there would be no supper tonight as their mother was in a horrible state of mind.

Macario turned slowly about, walked to the door and went out

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into the darkness of the night.

Not knowing what to do or where to go since his home was all in a turmoil, tired as he was from his very hard day's labor, and feeling as though he were to sink down on his knees, he took, as if automatically, the path which led to the woods — his realm where he was sure to find the quiet of which he was so badly in need.

Arriving at the spot where, in the early morning, he had buried the *guaje* bottle, he stopped, searched for the exact place, took out the bottle, and quickly as he had not moved in many years, ran back to his hut.

"Give me a cup filled with fresh clean water," he ordered in a loud and determined voice on opening the door.

His wife hurried as if given new hope, and in a few seconds she brought an earthen cup of water.

"Now, folks, you leave the room. Get out of here, all of you, and leave me alone with that son of mine. I'll see what I can do about it."

"No use, Macario, can't you see he has only a few minutes left? You'd better kneel down and say the prayers with us while he is breathing his last, so that his soul may be saved," one of the women told him.

"You heard what I said and you do as you've been advised," he said, sharply cutting off any further protest.

Never before had his wife heard him speak in such a harsh, commanding manner. Almost afraid of him, she urged the women out of the hut.

They were all gone.

Macario closed the door behind them, turned to the cot, and when he looked up he saw his bony dinner guest standing opposite him, the cot with the child in it between the two.

The visitor stared at him out of his deep dark holes he had for eyes, hesitated, shrugged, and slowly, as though still weighing his decision, moved toward the baby's feet, remaining there for the next few seconds while the father poured a generous dose of the medicine into the cup filled with water.

Seeing his partner shaking his head in disapproval, Macario remembered that only one drop would have sufficed for the cure. Yet, it was too late now, and the liquid could not be returned to the bottle, for it was already mixed with fresh water.

Macario lifted the baby's head, forced the little mouth open and let the drink trickle into it, taking care that nothing was spilled. To his great joy he noted that the baby, once his mouth had been moistened, started to swallow voluntarily. Soon he had taken the whole to its last drop.

Hardly could the medicine have

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reached his stomach when the child began to breathe freely. Color returned slowly but visibly to his pale face, and he moved his head in search of better comfort.

The father waited a few minutes longer, and seeing that the baby was recovering miraculously fast, he called in his wife.

Only one look did the mother give her baby when she fell to her knees by the cot and cried out loud: "Glory be to God and the Holy Virgin. I thank you, my Lord in Heaven; my little baby will live."

Hearing the mother's excited outburst, all the women who had been waiting outdoors rushed in, and seeing what had happened while the father had been alone with his son they crossed themselves, gasped and stared at Macario as if noting his existence for the first time and as though he were a stranger in the house.

One hour later the whole village was assembled at Macario's to see with their own eyes whether it was true what the women, running about the village, were telling the people.

The baby, his cheeks rosy, his little fists pressed close to his chin, was profoundly asleep, and anybody could see that all danger was past.

Next morning Macario got up at his usual time, sat down at the table for his breakfast, looked for his machete, ax and ropes and, taciturn as always, left home to go out to the woods and there chop fuel for the villagers. The bottle with the medicine he took along with him and buried at the same spot from which he had taken it the night before.

So he went about his job for the next six weeks when one night, on returning home, he found Ramiro waiting for him. Ramiro asked him, please, to come around to his place and see what he might do about his wife who had been sick for several days and was now sinking fast.

Ramiro, the principal storekeeper and merchant of the whole community and the richest man in the municipality, explained that he had heard of Macario's curing powers and that he would like him to try his talents on his young wife.

"Fetch me a little bottle, a very little glass bottle from your store. I'll wait for you here and think over what I perhaps could do for your wife."

Ramiro brought the bottle, a medicine bottle, holding one ounce of fluid.

"What are you going to do with the bottle, Macario?"

"Leave that to me, Ramiro. You just go home and wait for me. I have to see your wife first before I can say whether or not I can save her. She'll hold on all right until I come, don't worry over

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that. In the meantime, I will go out in the fields and look for some herbs which I know to be good medicine."

He went into the night, searched for his bottle, filled the little crystal flask half full with the precious liquid, buried the bottle again and walked to Ramiro's who lived in one of the three one-story brick houses the village boasted.

He found the woman rapidly nearing her end, and she was as close to it as had been his little son.

Ramiro looked at Macario's eyes. Macario shrugged for an answer. After a while he said: "You'd better go out now and leave me alone with your wife."

Ramiro obeyed. Yet, extremely jealous of his young and very pretty wife, pretty even now when near her death, he peeped through a hole in the door to watch Macario's doings.

Macario, already close to the door, turned abruptly with the intention to ask for a glass of fresh water..

Ramiro, his eyes still pressed to the door, was not quick enough in getting away and so, when Macario, by a resolute pull, opened the door, Ramiro fell full length into the room.

"Not very decent of you, Ramiro," Macario said, comprehending what the jealous man had been about. "Just for that I should decline giving your young wife back to you. You don't deserve her, you know that, don't you?"

He stopped in great surprise.

He could not understand himself what had come over him this very minute. Why he, the poorest and humblest man in the village, a common wood-chopper, had dared to speak to the haughtiest and richest man, the millionaire of the village, in a manner which the judge at the county court would hardly have risked. But seeing Ramiro, that mighty and powerful man, standing before him humiliated and with the gesture of a beggar trembling with fear that Macario might refuse to heal his wife, Macario had suddenly become aware that he had become a great power himself, a great doctor of whom that arrogant Ramiro expected miracles.

Very humble now, Ramiro begged Macario's forgiveness for having spied upon him, and in the most pitiful way he pleaded with him to save his wife, who was about to give him his first child in less than four months.

"How much would you ask for giving her back to me sane and healthy like she was before?"

"I do not sell my medicine for prices, I do not set prices. It's you, Ramiro, who have to make the price. Only you can know what your wife is worth to you. So name the price yourself."

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"Would ten doubloons do, my dear good Macario?"

"That's what your wife is worth to you? Only ten doubloons?"

"Don't take it that way, dear Macario. Of course she means far more to me than all my money. Money I can make again any day that God will allow me to live. But once my wife is gone where would I find another one like her? Not in this world. I'll make it one hundred doubloons then, only, please, save her."

Macario knew Ramiro well, only too well did he know him. Both had been born and raised in that village. Ramiro was the son of the richest merchant of the village as he himself was the richest man today — whereas Macario was the son of the poorest day laborer in the community as he himself was now the poorest wood-chopper with the biggest family of the whole village to support. And as he knew Ramiro so very well, nobody would have to tell him that, once the merchant's wife was cured, her husband would try to chisel down on the one hundred doubloons as much as he possibly could and if Macario did not yield there would be a long and nasty fight between the two men for many years to come.

Realizing all that, Macario now said: "I'll take the ten doubloons which you offered me first."

"Oh, thank you, Macario, I thank you, indeed I do, and not for cutting down on the price but that you're willing to cure her. I shall never forget what you have done for us, I'm sure, I shall never forget it. I only hope that the unborn will be safe also."

"It surely will," Macario said, assured of his success since he had seen his bony dinner companion standing where he liked best to see him.

"Now, bring me a glass of fresh water," he told Ramiro.

The water was brought and Macario counseled the merchant: "Don't you dare peep in again for, mind you, if you do I might fail and it will be all your fault. So remember, no spying, no peeping. Now, leave me alone with the patient."

This time Macario was extremely careful in not spending more than exactly one drop of the valuable liquid. As hard as he could he even tried to cut that one drop into two halves. By his talk with Ramiro he had suddenly understood how much his medicine was really worth if such a proud and rich man as Ramiro would humble himself before the wood-chopper for no other reason than that his wife might be cured by the poor woodman's medicine.

In realizing that, he visioned what his future might be like if he would forget about his wood-chopping and stick by his medicine exclusively. Naturally enough,

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the quintessence of that future was an unlimited supply of roast turkeys any time he wanted them.

His one-time dinner guest, seeing him cutting the one drop in half, nodded approvingly when Macario looked at him for advice.

Two days after Ramiro's wife had recovered fully, she told her husband that she was positively sure that the baby had not been hurt in the least by her sickness, as she could feel him all right.

Ramiro in his great joy handed Macario the ten gold pieces, not only without prattling over that high price but with a hundred thanks thrown in. He invited the whole Macario family to his store where everyone, husband, wife, and all the children, was allowed to take as much home as everybody could carry in his arms. Then he threw a splendid dinner to which the Macarios were invited as his guests of honor.

Macario built a real house now for his family, bought some pieces of good land and began cultivating them, because Ramiro had loaned him one hundred doubloons at very low interest.

Ramiro had done so not solely out of gratitude. He was too shrewd a businessman to loan out money without thinking of fat gains. He realized that Macario had a great future ahead of him, and that it would be a very sound investment to keep Macario in the village and make people come here to see him, rather than have him take up his residence in a city. The more visitors the village would have on account of Macario's fame, the more important would grow Ramiro's business. In expectation of this development in the village's future, Ramiro added to his various lines in business that of banking.

He gambled fast on Macario and he won. He won far beyond his most fantastic dreams.

It was he who did all the advertising and all the propaganda to draw attention to Macario's great gift. Hardly had he sent out a few letters to business friends in the city, than sick people flocked to the village in the hope of being cured of their maladies, many having been declared uncurable by learned physicians.

Soon Macario could build himself a mansion. He bought up all the land around and converted it into gardens and parks. His children were sent to schools and universities as far as Paris and Salamanca.

As his one-time dinner guest had promised him, so it came to pass. Macario's half turkey was paid for a million-fold.

Regardless of his riches and his fame, Macario remained honest and uncorrupted. Anyone who wanted to be cured was asked how much his health was worth to him. And as Macario had done

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in his first case, so he did ever after in all other cases — that is, the patients or their relatives would decide the price.

A poor man or woman who had no more to offer than one silver peso, or a pig or a rooster, he would heal just as well as the rich who, in many instances, had made prices as high as twenty thousand doubloons. He cured men and women of the highest nobility, many of whom had crossed the ocean and had come from Spain, Italy, Portugal, France and other countries and who had come for no other reason than to see him and consult him.

Whoever came to consult him would be told frankly that he could do nothing to save him, if Macario saw the Bone Man stand at the patient's head. Nothing did he charge for that consultation.

People, whoever they were, accepted his final verdict without discussion. No longer would they try arguing with him, once he had told them that they were beyond help.

More or less half the people consulting him were saved; the other half were claimed by his partner. It happened often for weeks at a time that he would not meet one patient whom he could cure, because his dinner guest would decide differently. Such weeks the people in the land called "his low-power periods".

While at the beginning of his practice he was able to cut a drop of his precious medicine into two, he soon learned to cut each drop into eight. He acquired all devices known then by which a drop might be divided up into practically an infinite number of mites. Yet, no matter how much he cut and divided, regardless of how cleverly he administered each dose to make it as small as possible and yet retain its effectiveness, the medicine had frightfully fast become scarcer and scarcer.

He had drained the *guaje* bottle during the first month of his practice, once he had observed the true value of the liquid. He knew that a *guaje* bottle will not only soak into its walls a certain amount of any fluid it may hold, but worse, the liquid will evaporate, and rather fast, through the bottle's walls. It is for that reason that water kept in a *guaje* bottle of the kind natives use will stay always cool even should the day be very hot.

So he had taken out the medicine and poured it into bottles of dark glass, tightly sealed.

The last little bottle had been opened months ago, and one day Macario noted to his horror that there were only about two drops left. Consequently, he decided to make it known that he would retire from practice and cure nobody any longer.

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By now he had become really old and felt that he had a right to spend the last few years of his life in peace.

These last two drops he meant to keep for members of his family exclusively, and especially for his beloved wife, whom he had had to cure already two times during the last ten years and whom he was afraid he might lose — a loss which would be very difficult for him to bear.

Just about that same time it so happened that the eight-year-old son of the viceroy, don Juan Marquez de Casafuerte, the highest personage of New Spain, fell sick.

The best doctors were called for help. None could do anything for the boy. The doctors admitted frankly that this boy had been stricken by a sickness not known to medical science.

The viceroy had heard of Macario. Who hadn't? But he owed it to his dignity, education and high social and political position to consider Macario a quack, the more so since he was called thus by every doctor who had a title from an accredited university.

The child's mother, however, less given to dignity when the life of her son was at stake, made life for the viceroy so miserable that finally he saw no other way out of his dilemma than to send for Macario.

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Macario disliked traveling and rarely left his village, and then only for short trips. Yet, an order given by the viceroy himself had to be obeyed under penalty of death.

So he had to go.

Brought before the viceroy he was told what was expected of him.

The viceroy, still not believing in the so-called miracles which Macario was said to have performed, spoke to him in the same way as he would have spoken to any native wood-chopper.

"It was not I who called you, understand that, my good man. Her Highness, la Marquesa, insisted on bringing you here to save our son whom, so it appears, no learned medico can cure. I make it quite clear to you that in case you actually save our child, one-fourth of the fortune which I hold here in New Spain shall be yours. Besides, you may ask anything you see here in my palace, whatever it is that catches your fancy and whatever its value. That will be yours also. Apart from all that, I personally will hand you a license which will entitle you to practice medicine anywhere in New Spain with the same rights and privileges as any learned medico, and you shall be given a special letter with my seal on it which will give you immunity for life against any arrest by police or soldiers, and which will safeguard you against any unjustified court action. I believe, my good man, that this is a royal payment for your service."

Macario nodded, yet said nothing.

The viceroy went on: "What I promised you in the case that you save our son follows exactly the suggestions made by Her Highness, la Marquesa, my wife, and what I promise I always keep."

The Marquesa stopped for a few seconds, as if waiting for Macario to say something.

Macario, however, said nothing and made no gesture.

"But now, listen to my own suggestions," the viceroy continued. "If you should fail to save our son, I shall hand you over to the High Court of the Inquisition, charging you with the practice of witchcraft under pact with the devil, and you shall be burned alive at the stake on the Alameda and in public."

Again the viceroy stopped to see what expression his threat had made upon Macario.

Macario paled, but still said nothing.

"Have you understood in full what I have said?"

"I have, Your Highness," Macario said briefly, trembling slightly as he attempted to make an awkward bow.

"Now, I personally shall show

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you to our sick child. Follow me."

They entered the boy's room where two nurses were in attendance, merely watching the child's slow decline, unable to do anything save keep him comfortable. His mother was not present. She had, by the doctor's order, been confined to her room as she was close to a complete breakdown.

The boy was resting in a bed becoming his age, a light bed made of fine wood, though not looking rich.

Macario went close and looked around for a sign of his dinner guest.

Slightly, so as not to make his gesture seem suspicious, he touched a special little pocket in his trousers to be sure he had the crystal flask with the last two drops of medicine about him.

Now he said: "Will you, Your Highness, I pray, leave this room for one hour, and will Your Highness, please, give orders that everybody else will leave, too, so that I may remain alone with the young patient?"

The Marques hesitated, evidently being afraid that this ignorant peasant might do his son some harm if left alone with him.

Macario, noting that expression of uneasiness shown by the viceroy, recalled, at this very instant, his first cure of a patient not of his own family, that is, Ramiro's young wife in his native village. Ramiro had hesitated in a similar way when told to leave the room and let Macario alone with the young woman in bed.

These two cases of hesitation had been the only ones he had ever experienced during his long practice. And Macario wondered whether that might carry some significance in his destiny, that perhaps today, with only two little drops of his medicine left, he beheld the same expression of hesitancy in a person who wanted a great service done but did not trust the man who was the only one who could render that service.

He was now alone with the boy.

And suddenly there appeared his partner, taking his stand at the boy's head.

The two, Macario and the Bone Man, had never again spoken one to the other since they had had a turkey dinner together. Whenever they would meet in a sick room, they would only look at each other, yet not speak.

Macario had never asked of his partner any special favor. Never had he claimed from him any individual whom the Bone Man had decided to take. He even had let go two grandchildren of his without arguing his dinner guest's first claim.

This time everything was different. He would be burned alive at the stake as a witch doctor convicted of having signed a pact with the devil. His children, now

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all of them in highly honored positions, would fall into disgrace, because their father had been condemned by the Holy Inquisition to suffer the most infamous death a Christian could die. All his fortune and all his landed property, which he had meant to leave to his children and grandchildren, would be confiscated and given to the church. He did not mind losing his fortune. It had never meant much to him personally anyhow.

What he did mind above all was the happiness of his children. But more still than of his children he was, in this most terrible moment of his whole life, thinking of his beloved wife.

She would go crazy with grief on learning what had happened to him in that strange, vast city so far away from home, and she would be unable to come to his aid or even comfort him during his last hours on earth. It was for her sake, not for his own, that this time he decided to fight it out with the Bone Man.

"Give me that child," he pleaded, "give him to me for old friendship's sake. I've never asked any favor of you, not one little favor for the half turkey you ate with so much gusto when you needed a good dinner more than anything else. You gave me voluntarily what I had not asked you for. Give me that boy, and I'll pour out the last drop of your medicine and break the bottle, so that not even one little wet spot be left inside to be used for another cure. Please, oh please, give me that boy. It isn't for my sake that I ask you this. It is for my dear, faithful, loyal and beloved wife's. You know, or at least you can imagine, what it means for a Christian family if one of its members is burned at the stake alive and in public. Please, let me have the boy. I shall not take or touch the riches offered me for curing him. You found me a poor man and I was happy then in my own way. I don't mind being poor again, as I used to be. I'm willing to chop wood again for the villagers as I did when we met for the first time. Only, please, I pray, give me that boy."

The Bone Man looked at him with his deep black holes for a long time. If he had a heart he was questioning it at this moment. Now he looked down before him as though he were deliberating this case from every angle to find the most perfect solution. Obviously, his orders were to take the child away. He could not express his thoughts by his eyes or his face, yet his gestures clearly showed his willingness to help a friend in dire need, for by his attitude he tried to explain that, in this particular case, he was powerless to discover a

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way out which would meet halfway the problems of both.

Again, for a very long while, his look rested upon the boy as though judging more carefully still Macario's plea against the child's fate, destined before he was born.

And again he looked at Macario as if pitying him and as though he felt deeply distressed.

Presently he shook his head slowly as might someone in great sadness who finds himself utterly helpless in a desperate situation.

He opened his fleshless jaws, and with a voice that sounded like heavy wooden sticks clubbed on a board he said: "I am sorry, compadre, very sorry, but in this case I can do nothing to help you out of that uncomfortable pool you have been put into. All I can say is that in few of my cases I have felt sadder than in this, believe me, compadre. I can't help it, I must take that boy."

"No, you mustn't. You mustn't. Do you hear me, you must not take that child." Macario yelled in great despair. "You must not, you cannot take him. I won't let you."

The Bone Man shook his head again, but said nothing.

And now, with a resolute jerk, Macario grabbed the boy's bed and quickly turned it round so that his partner found himself standing at the boy's feet.

Immediately the Bone Man vanished from sight for two short seconds and, like a flash, appeared at the boy's head once more.

Quickly Macario again turned the bed so that the Bone Man would stand at the feet, and again the Bone Man disappeared from the child's feet and stood at the boy's head.

Macario, wild with madness, turned the bed round and round as if it were a wheel. Yet, whenever he stopped for taking a breath, he would see his dinner guest standing at the boy's head, and Macario would start his crazy game again by which he thought that he might cheat the claimant out of his chosen subject.

It was too much for the old man, turning that bed round and round without gaining more than two seconds from eternity.

If, so he thought, he could stretch these two seconds into twenty hours only and leave the capital under the viceroy's impression that the boy was cured, he might escape that horrible punishment which he had been condemned to suffer.

He was so tired now that he could not turn the bed once more. Touching, as if by a certain impulse, the little pocket in his trousers, he discovered that the crystal flask with the last two drops of the precious medicine in

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it had been smashed during his wild play with the bed.

Fully realizing that loss and its significance, he felt as if he had been drained of the last spark of his life's energy and that his whole life had become empty.

Vaguely, he gazed about the room as though coming out of a trance in which he had been for an uncountable number of years, centuries perhaps. He recognized that his fate was upon him and that it would be useless to fight against it any longer.

So, letting his eyes wander around the whole room, they came to touch the boy's face and he found the boy gone.

As if felled he dropped to the floor, entirely exhausted.

Lying there motionless, he heard his one-time dinner guest speaking to him, softly this time.

He heard him say: "Once more, compadre, I thank you for the half turkey which you so generously gave me and which restored my strength, then waning, for another hundred years of tedious labor. It certainly was exquisite, if you understand that word. But now, coming to where we are at this hour, see, compadre, I have no power to save you from being burned at the stake on the Alameda and in public, because that is beyond my jurisdiction. Yet, I can save you from being burned alive and from being publicly defamed. And this, compadre, I shall do for old friendship's sake, and because you have always played fair and never tried to cheat me. A royal payment you received and you honored it like a royal payment. You have lived a very great man. Good-bye, compadre."

Macario opened his eyes and, on looking backwards, he saw his one-time dinner guest standing at his head.

Macario's wife, greatly worried over her husband's not coming home, called all the men of the village next morning to help her find Macario, who might be hurt somewhere deep in the woods and unable to return without help.

After several hours of searching, he was discovered at the densest part of the woods in a section far away from the village, so far that nobody would ever dare go there alone.

He was sitting on the ground, his body comfortably snuggled in the hollow of a huge tree trunk, dead, a big beautiful smile all over his face.

Before him on the ground banana leaves were spread out, serving as a table-cloth, and on them were lying the carefully cleaned bones of a half turkey.

Directly opposite, separated by a space of about three feet, there also were, in a like manner, banana leaves spread on which the

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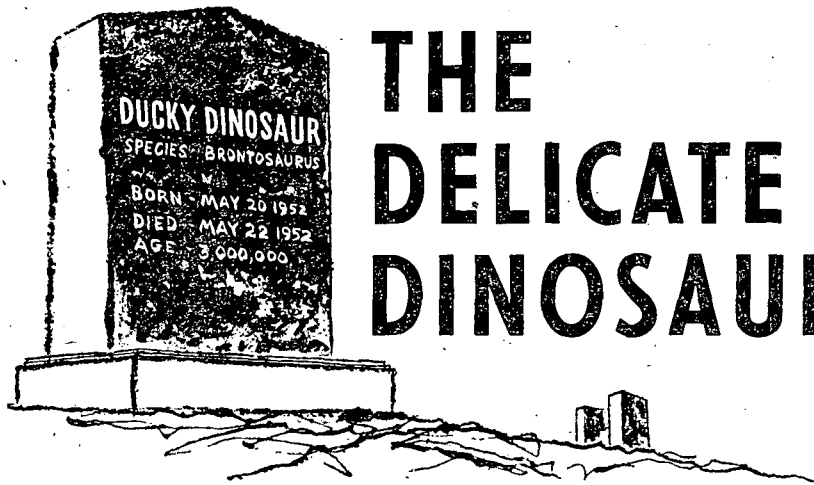

THE DELICATE DINOSAUR

By WILLIAM MARKHAM ALTMAN

Seen any dinosaurs lately? You haven't? Then that makes you about the only one! Honestly, all the people who haven't seen flying saucers are sure that Ducky, the delicate dinosaur, just turned left at Twelfth and Main! Call it a symptom of the times . . . or, if you want the real story, listen to the strange tale of Luther Doolittle, promotor extraordinary.

Bill Altman is an associate director for CBS, has done TV scripts for such programs as Danger, Suspense, Studio One, and has twice won Avery Hopwood Awards at the University of Michigan. This is his first published work of fiction.

If the phone rings once a day, it rings fifty times. The voice changes, but it's always the same excited revelation: "Mr. Doolittle? I just saw Ducky!"

Ducky, I might add, is a dinosaur.

Now, as far as I know, *nobody* could possibly have seen a live dinosaur for the last couple of million years. At least, nobody who is walking around loose.

Except me, that is.

My name is Luther Doolittle, and ever since I learned my way around a dictionary I've been arranging adjectives in a manner calculated to separate money from wallets. I've always snickered at the greenhorns who expect

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a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow. Being in the promotion business, I hasten to add, of course, that I have peddled those same pots to earn my beer and beans. Only now I don't know who's doing the laughing. It all began two months ago — on a Tuesday — at Metropolis Museum.

I swung open the big bronze door and went in. Like most everybody else, I probably wouldn't have given a second thought to all the fossils, Phoenician gravy-boats, and early Sumerian bric-a-brac on display inside the museum, if it weren't for the fact that I couldn't figure why I got summoned here. After all, if a great museum wants a promotion job done, why not pick on a big outfit? Then I jiggled the thirty-five cents in my pocket — the only assets the firm had — and decided not to tinker with the wheel of fortune.

In front of a Greek mirror, I stopped to check the outer man. The inner man was scared, but good. I straightened my tie, ran my hand through my hair — purely a nervous gesture since I have a crew-cut for low overhead — and headed down the corridor past the Fifth Dynasty Egyptian wing toward the suite occupied by the board of directors.

"Go right in, Mr. Doolittle. The Board is expecting you." The secretary smiled, and I tried to walk suavely through the door without tripping on the great oriental rug. I just made it.

"Archibald Buchanan," a voice was booming, "if you go through with this vulgar scheme to publicize Metropolis, I shall stop — at once — *all* my work on the flora and fauna of the Eocene era —" The voice belonged to Professor Wesley, a gigantic guy with a full beard.

"Don't talk like a fool," said Buchanan, a nervous little man at the head of the conference table.

"— Just as soon as my pension comes through!" He moved to sit down, but before he hit the chair he was up again with the clincher: "Including midget horses!"

"Oh, sit down, Wesley," Buchanan snapped wearily. Evidently Wesley was used to being told to shut up, because he did. He sat there pouting like a small child.

No one seemed to notice me except Professor Everett, who met me halfway across the room. "Nice of you to come," he smiled. We shook hands, and I wondered whether I should have wiped off the perspiration first. "Gentlemen," he announced, "this is Mr. Doolittle."

Wesley and Buchanan stopped wrangling and turned to stare. There I stood, a freshly uncrated specimen of *Species Promotiona* from the Madison Avenue excavations. I nodded nervously.

"Of Doolittle, Banks, Gold

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and . . . eh . . .?" Buchanan stopped.

"That's all," I said. Actually Doolittle was all, having recently and bitterly become sole and senior member, aged thirty-three. Jim Banks was now happily selling shoes, and Mel Gold had just upped and bought a farm outside Middleboro, New Hampshire. Likewise happy, just living for a change.

"Well, sit down, Doolittle, sit down," Buchanan snapped, indicating the chair at the far end of the table. He kept peering and squinting at me through his thick-lensed bifocals. His mouth was always a little bit open, as if he were about to toss in a peanut at any second. Only, if you ever met Archibald Buchanan, you'd know he wasn't the type.

"I have asked Mr. Doolittle to come here," Buchanan began in his high, clipped voice, "to present him with our peculiar problem. . . ." He droned on, and I raised my six-foot-even straight up in the fifteenth century throne-chair I occupied. "Mr. Doolittle," Buchanan was now saying, "would your firm take on the responsibility of — I believe the word is 'selling' — the museum to the public."

I swallowed hard. It was all over, and I didn't even have to close the sale! I was blissfully dreaming my way through a new office and reviving diplomatic contact with the telephone people, when the axe fell.

"We have managed to make available," Buchanan was still going on in his pedantic way, "one thousand dollars."

A thousand dollars! It wouldn't pay for postcards. Not to mention the fact that I couldn't make a dime on the deal. Now that the bubble had burst, all the tension drained out. "Look, fellows, I'm all for spreading some of this Greek stonework around town. Good deal." I nodded to a bust of Aristotle. "But it's no soap."

"I think I know what Mr. Doolittle means." Everett spoke wryly, sparing me the pain. "The amount would be wasted, and the results nil."

"On the nose," I seconded.

"I see." Buchanan was visibly shaken, because he closed his mouth. "Dr. Everett, the staff — a few of us, you know — pooled our . . . what little we had, in the hope that . . ." He never finished the sentence.

The poor honest guys! What did they think the world was like? "Professor Buchanan, even if the money were enough — which it isn't — you'd still need a pitch."

"I beg your pardon?" Buchanan said, peering again.

"A gimmick — a Cinderella story. Something to sell."

Wesley was on his feet again. "If the people don't want to know

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their cultural heritage," the beard waved, "then they deserve to remain ignorant!"

"And they'll love every minute of it," I nodded in agreement.

"What about a pamphlet?" Buchanan glowed. "Describe the exhibits. You know: Greek section, North American section. . . ."

"North America is a department now. The new wing," Wesley corrected.

"Of course. I forgot." Buchanan turned to me. "A pamphlet!" he beamed.

Maybe I should have taken their thousand, pocketed five hundred, and made them happy with a little booklet. They'd never have known the difference, and I'd have been spared the two mad months I just spent in "happy valley"! Instead, I kissed that new office good-bye and explained: "I'm a square operator. Believe me, I *need* this account. But unless you have an angle to promote this granite warehouse, it's a waste of money."

"A modest brochure on midget horses? Fascinating!" said Wesley, getting into the act. No local green-sheet reader could have been more intense than Wesley was about these prehistoric gee-gees that pranced about millions of years before the first parlay player appeared.

"You'd be surprised, sir," I let him have it, "but the number of people in this city who live and breathe midget horses would stagger you."

"If you'd come back to the twentieth century for five minutes, Wesley, you'd realize Metropolis is mortgaged to the roof." Buchanan sighed, closed his mouth, and Everett added solemnly: "We can't even afford to pay the electric light bill."

Valiantly, Wesley struggled to his feet. "I — I shall be honored to donate as many candles as are needed," he offered gravely.

"Sit down, Wesley!" Wesley sat. "Well, Mr. Doolittle?"

"It just won't work, Professor. Believe me." I made a weak attempt at a smile. "I'm sorry."

"I have spent my life," said Buchanan wistfully and to no one in particular, "happily pouring over the complicated credit system of ancient Babylon. My spare time I have devoted to the museum's finances." He sighed. "Both are now equally defunct. Very well, gentlemen," he resolved, "facts are facts. We shall close Metropolis next week."

"I wish I could suggest something. I . . ." Never in my life had I been more sincere, and in my business that was saying a lot.

Everett shook his head, and all the bright front was gone. "It's a crying shame. So *much* work to be done."

Even Wesley thought of someone else. "But Dr. Preston can't

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stop work on the dinosaur egg now!"

"It's too bad," shrugged Buchanan.

I had slipped away from the mourners and was easing out the door, so when Wesley threw his rabbit-punch, it hit me right in the back of the neck: "But the egg may rot! Time is of the upmost —"

I think I cocked my head the way a dog does when you make a face at it. Not sure I had heard right, I turned around. "Did you say a dinosaur egg . . . would *rot?*"

"How long do you think it will keep?" thundered Wesley, as logically as the Mad Hatter.

"Isn't it . . . I mean, isn't it a little overdue now?"

"It has been on ice!" Wesley triumphantly explained.

"Dr. Preston found this egg in an Alaskan glacier — perfectly preserved." Buchanan extended his hand as he made the explanation. "On behalf of the staff, Mr. Doolittle, I wish to thank you for your . . ."

But I couldn't hear him. Inside my head a Geiger-counter was popping off like crazy. "An egg . . . a dinosaur egg — like this — is rare?" I stammered.

"Priceless," said Wesley. "Next to midget horses, nothing so —" Then he smiled gently.

"The only one in existence." Buchanan was proud.

"And it's been in the deep-freeze all this time?"

"Just a lucky find." And again Buchanan offered his hand. "Well, Mr. Doolittle, it has been —"

"Gentlemen, I accept your offer!"

"What?" Buchanan was confused.

"That egg may not look like much, but it's pure gold! It's the fairy tale! Where is Dr. Preston?"

"In the icebox — in the basement."

"Gentlemen, relax. Metropolis is out of the red!"

"But I don't — " Buchanan's mouth was open again.

"This egg may be the greatest discovery since the omelet!"

I banged on the door of the room they called the icebox. Actually, it was one of those temperature-controlled places. A tall, sad-looking man opened the door.

"Dr. Preston?" I said breathlessly.

"Nope," he shook his bald head. "I'm Dudley Jameson. Janitor."

I saw the broom in his hand as I brushed past him to a young woman who was adjusting an X-ray machine. "Where's Dr. Preston, Miss?"

"I'm Dr. Preston," she said, turning around to face me.

"Well, how nice," I said, staring at her. Pick the most unlikely

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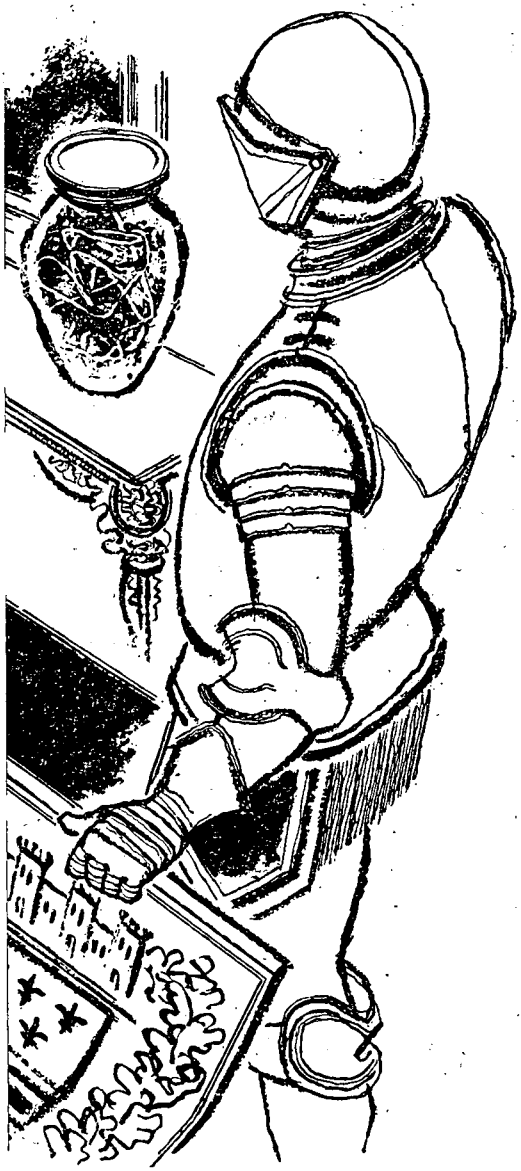
Illustrator: J. Bryan



looking girl in the world to be an archeologist, and it would have to be Janet Preston.

She brushed back a brunette curl from her forehead. "Who are you?"

"Doolittle, Luther Doolittle. I'm going to publicize Metrop —"

"Oh, yes. I've heard." She froze. "There's nothing down here to publicize." She turned her pretty face away, brushing me off like a half-baked theory.

"The egg. Where is the egg?" I asked excitedly.

"Right there." I swung around to see. "Be careful," she cautioned. "Don't touch it!"

There it sat, and I'd nearly knocked it off the table. It was about the size of a football, sort of grey-colored, and it rested on a plaster of paris base.

"What a beautiful sight." I sniffed at it. "Still good?"

"It's in a state of suspended animation."

"I know, but is there anything inside?" I asked impatiently.

"Mr. Doolittle," she pulled her jacket tighter, "can't you go somewhere else? Publicize Dr. Wesley's midget horses."

"The public wants to know about this egg."

"But I have months of work to do!" She took off her glasses, and she looked even better.

"Look, Dr. — er . . ."

"Preston," she snapped.

"In front of the Preston?"

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"Janet."

"Janet." I turned it over in my mind. "I like that."

"That's just for friends!" and back went the glasses.

"Janet, listen. This museum can't get credit to buy letterheads. We're going to get it back on its feet!" Evidently it was colder than I realized, because I sneezed.

"God bless you," she said mechanically, and turned the switch on the X-ray machine. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm busy."

"This is the only angle in this whole fossil factory." I was desperate. "Nobody wants to hear about King Tut —"

"King Tutankhamen," she corrected me.

"Or him either. De Mille has done that."

"But who cares about eggs?"

"Not eggs. *The* egg!" I pitched it hard.

"I — I don't like the whole idea. It's not . . . scientific."

"But it's salable!"

"The answer is *no!*" She may have been a Ph.D. and a scientist, but that will of hers was all woman.

"Do you or don't you want Metropolis to stay open?"

"Of course I do, but —"

I got up steam and rolled on. "Have you any right, Janet, to stand in the way of shoving culture down this city's throat?"

"I —"

"Of course you haven't!"

Her sales resistance was breaking. The more it cracked, the prettier she got. "But my work?"

After that, I didn't give her a chance to say anything. I wound it up: "You're going to work. As you never did before." I took her shoulders in my hands. "What do you say?"

"All right," she sighed, and I saw her eyes were clear and blue. "What do you want me to do?"

"Hatch that egg!"

Her mouth worked furiously, but for a second nothing came out. Then, "You're mad," she blurted angrily.

"Try an incubator. Try digitalis. I'll make this icebox more famous than Frigidaire! Newspapers, television —"

"But my reputation! Every scientist knows that egg is dead."

"But the public will want to believe it's alive! They'll worry about . . ." Then the name came to me. " . . . about Ducky. That's it! Ducky the Dinosaur! They'll watch every move he makes." I think I was even selling myself. "All the world loves a baby!"

"A baby!" She stood up, all trim five-feet-five of her. "Get out of here!"

I was already writing my first press release aloud: "Ducky, three million years old, is about to break forth! Bridging the gap across millions of years from murky pre-

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historic times to the century of the atom, an egg —"

"Can I help?" Dudley, who had been sitting near the door watching our tennis match, eagerly interrupted.

"Absolutely, Dudley. *You* are god-father to Ducky!"

He beamed, a man with a mission.

"This is a horrible mistake!" But Janet was punching in the dark.

"Let me worry about that. Dudley — where can I work?"

"There's a storeroom next door."

"I wouldn't think of working anywhere else." I bent over the egg. "I'm going to hatch you, Ducky, and all America is going to root for you. Dudley, go find me an incubator."

"Yes, sir," he said, dropping the broom and sprinting out the door.

In a desperate, defeated monotone, Janet kept repeating, "It won't work. It's madness. It won't work."

"That's beside the point. This egg is going back in the nest!" I whispered to it gently: "Ducky! Hatch, Ducky! The world is your oyster!"

I set up shop in the storeroom and pounded out press releases all night. My typewriter rested on an unidentified sarcophagus, and I sat on a crate stencilled: EGYPTIAN HEADGEAR. FRAGILE. Dudley, happier than he'd ever been, served as copyboy. All night long he rode the subway, going from city-room to city-room, dropping releases as I typed them. The next day the most staid and respectable morning paper carried an eight-column streamer: *Metropolis Museum Attempts to Hatch Dinosaur Egg!* The afternoon tabloids were even better.

Half of that thousand dollars I sank into a singing commercial, and pretty soon everybody was humming:

What can make your life much happier?
Ducky *makes your life much happier!*
Send in your crisp, green bills today —
Help speed Ducky on his way!

The contributions poured in, and we had to hire fifteen girls to sort the mail and count the money.

Ducky caught the imagination of the country, and within forty-eight hours he — or she or it — was a national institution. For three solid days I called every newspaper man I knew, planted feature stories and sold rights to the name *Ducky Dinosaur*. Every promoter in the business wanted to buy in. Baby foods, rattles, children's soap, all carried the magic phrase. Even plain chicken eggs from New Jersey claimed to have "that rare, sweet, prehistoric flavor". Within a week the small fry had deserted the interplanetary space routes of TV, and manufacturers of yesterday's fast-

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moving neutralizer-ray guns were tearing their hair and quickly retooling for maces, axes and lionskins. *Variety* headlined the public excitement: *Ducky Soap Series Boff!* Talk about giving away gold bricks! It was an adman's dream.

Even *The Daily Worker* got into the act and front-paged a scathing editorial. Ducky, they screamed, was a Wall Street device to stave off economic collapse.

Never in history had a people waited more breathlessly than they did for the hatching of this two-and-three-quarter pounds of eggshell.

Through it all, I kept thinking about Janet Preston. Actually, I didn't see her again for a full five days.

"Phenomenal! Simply phenomenal," said Buchanan at the board meeting.

"It's all a lie! A fraud!" Wesley was still doing business at the same old stand.

"But Wesley — over a million dollars in contributions!" Buchanan was holding up some of the bigger bills as I came into the room. "Mr. Doolittle, it's wonderful. The nation has taken Ducky to its heart."

"It has also reached for its pocketbook," I added, "and that's the test."

"Not everybody!" said the voice of doom sourly. He waved a little magazine at me. "*The Anthropological Journal* has debunked us."

"What's the circulation?" I asked.

"About five hundred."

"Forget it," I said.

"Those crowds," clucked Buchanan at the window. "It's like the World Series."

And it was. About twenty hulking Pinkerton men struggled vainly to preserve order in the line that stretched for blocks, waiting to get a peek at the egg in its chrome-plated, glass-enclosed incubator. Every once in a while someone would shriek excitedly that he'd seen the egg move. It was impossible, but the oftener it happened the longer it took to wipe the doubt from my mind.

Buchanan got serious. "Mr. Doolittle, may we stop now? And put Ducky back in the icebox?"

I think it was right then — in the middle of that sentence — that I realized what had happened. Ducky back in the icebox? They just didn't understand. "Ducky doesn't belong to you any more. He belongs to everybody." They were confused. "If he goes back in the icebox like an ordinary egg," I went on, "that crowd out there will slit your throats!"

Even Everett, the eternal op-

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timist, was worried. Oh, he didn't say much, but I could see it in his face. The more Buchanan and Wesley wailed about the museum and what was happening to its reputation as a bulwark of science, the more scared I got. There just wasn't any way out.

Funny thing, though, my fright was a picture of Janet slowly pulling the trigger of a shotgun aimed right at my head.

"Our reputation. It's in peril!" Buchanan was almost frantic.

"What?" I asked, coming back to earth.

"It's in the ashcan. We're a side-show," echoed Wesley glumly.

I didn't answer. I couldn't. Instead, I just looked out the window at the long line of believers.

Everett sounded almost contrite as he said, "It's true, Mr. Doolittle. Two more of our staff quit today."

"And baby makes three!" Janet Preston wheeled into the room like a runaway filly. "Professor Buchanan," she said angrily, but looking straight at me, "I haven't been able to get near that egg in a week."

"Now, Janet — I mean, Dr. Preston, don't worry. . . ." I floundered.

"Don't worry!" She backed me into Aristotle's corner. "I'm the laughing stock of the archeological world. And that egg will never hatch. Never in another million years!"

"One hundred and fifty million Americans are ready to call you a liar," I fought back, pointing out the window.

"You —!" She couldn't find

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the words. "You phony copywriter! I hope you spend the rest of your life promoting — *birdseed!*" She looked so pretty when she got angry that way.

"The campaign was a success. Wasn't it, fellows?" They nodded unhappily, as if I'd asked for confirmation of their own death sentences.

"Only one person is mad enough to suppose that that egg will ever produce a dinosaur!"

"Don't be so sure." I said. "The egg is perfectly preserved. You said so yourself, Dr. Preston." I had to believe it!

"That shell is as empty as your head." She brandished two X-ray plates, and the trio swooped down to gobble.

"Holy Mackerel, let me see!" I grabbed the plates and ran to the window. It was true. A herd of hungry squirrel couldn't have done a better job of emptying that shell. The worst had happened!

"And I'm leaving!" She snatched the plates out of my hand. "Perhaps a few newspapers would like to see these negatives!"

"Janet, wait!" I was at the door.

"Now, what good would that do, Dr. Preston?" said Everett, throwing oil on the waters. "Besides, we need you here." He was smooth all right.

"Need me?" Janet repeated sarcastically. "For what?" She spun around, livid, to face us. "To baby-sit for that incubator in the lobby? And you! You ought to be on exhibit here!" She swung. My face snapped up with the sting of the blow. "That's for Ducky!" She wheeled, and headed for the door.

"Quite a wallop for a little fellow," I said wryly, rubbing my cheek.

She turned and came back. "And this is for me!" This time she got the other cheek, and she was out the door before I could say ouch.

"Mr. Doolittle, please! Don't let her leave. Not with those X-rays. . . ." Buchanan wailed.

As I reached the refrigerator room I slowed down. The door was ajar and Janet was sitting at the work table, her head in her arms.

"Janet?" I said quietly.

Startled, she looked up, and I could see she'd been crying. "Please leave my icebox, Mr. Doolittle. At once." Her voice was as frigid as the atmosphere.

"The name is Luther," I said gently, drawing my coat-collar tighter.

"In my book it's mud!" she flared, turning away.

"Of course," I said gaily, "I — I hate the name Luther."

"Check!"

"My friends call me Lou."

"What friends?" She spun around to face me. Her eyes were all misty, and she pursed her lips defiantly the way women do when

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they're trying to be brave. My future as a promotion man — even the very real possibility of a stretch in the clink — didn't matter at the moment. I could take anything but her loathing for me.

"Janet — it's my fault, this mess," I said, feeling very small. "But you can't leave Metropolis like this."

"Watch me!" she said, grabbing an instrument case from the shelf.

"Where will you go?"

"There's always an expedition to — to . . ." She made a grotesque little face, and the tears broke through. " . . . To Afghanistan or somewhere."

"The museum needs you."

"No they don't." She wiped away a tear and began throwing instruments into the case.

"I need you." It came out simply. It wasn't what I'd planned to say, but it was true.

"All anybody needs is that stunt of yours. That Ducky Dinosaur. That three-million-year-old annuity!" I sneezed and she said, "God bless you," very perfunctorily.

I tried to pull my coat tighter. "Can't we go somewhere where it's warmer, and talk?"

"I'm quite comfortable." I could see her breath.

"I admit this whole Ducky Dinosaur pitch was my idea, but —"

"Sporting of you. Please pass the microscope."

"— But I only did it because the museum was in trouble. And I happen to think that all this is worth saving."

"You did it because you have the soul of a commercial." She snatched the microscope.

"No, Janet, look —"

"*You* look!" she demanded, holding up a little green box. "*Ducky Dinosaur Food.* Plain turtle-food! A million packages in a million homes!" Viciously, she flung it to the floor.

"It brought in twenty thousand dollars. To carry on research."

She looked at me, frightened. "Luther, you've go to stop all this."

I smiled weakly. "How?"

"Tell them the truth. Tell them that egg has as much chance of hatching as the ones in their own iceboxes." She was being so logical. To her it was so simple.

"Darling, they —" I stopped myself. "Janet, they wouldn't believe me."

"Why not?"

Then it hit me: the whole horrible wonder of it. "Because I've created a myth." I ran my fingers absently across the plaster base on which the egg had rested. I was trying to spell it out for myself as much as for Janet. "A fairy tale that's just logical enough to

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pass for the real McCoy." I looked at her. "A fairy tale, Janet, is a thing of awe, and not to be laughed at." I sat down and shook my head. "No one would believe me."

She was staring into space too. "It certainly is a mess, Luther." I sneezed again, and this time her "God bless you" sounded almost tender.

"Janet, you can't leave Metropolis. I — I feel responsible."

"How very logical," she flared again, but I acted fast.

"I'll call off all publicity. No more releases. No more pictures —"

"And Ducky out of that incubator?"

"Ducky back in the icebox," I promised. "Will you stay?" I asked contritely.

"I'll stay." It was the first time I'd seen her smile, and I saw she had dimples.

I put my hands on her shoulders. "Janet? You're the most . . . the most wonderful . . ."

"Yes, Luther?" she sounded breathless.

" . . . The most wonderful archeologist I've ever known."

It was so good to hear her laugh. "That's the nicest compliment anyone ever paid me."

"I can do better," I said, edging closer.

"We'll . . . talk later." She slipped away. "Go get Ducky out of that incubator. And no tricks?"

"No tricks!" I said happily.

I practically floated upstairs and into the main lobby where the incubator stood. Dudley was peering into the case and talking excitedly to two uniformed Pinkerton men. "All right, boys," I said to the two cops. "Go home. It's all over. Ducky is through."

"He sure is!" said Dudley, hoisting his broom like a spear. "Ducky has arrived!"

"Arrived?" I stared. "Where?" Then I peered over, through the hinged glass door at the top of the incubator. "Holy Smokes!" I tried to say, but it came out as a gurgle.

There, sitting like royalty on the blue plush cushion, were *two* halves of the eggshell. The impression was for all the world like every calendar picture you ever saw of a little chick stepping out into the world. Only the chick was *missing!*

I wanted to get out. My stomach felt the same way. "Listen, fellows: we've got to keep this quiet, understand?" They nodded, but it was the excited nod of small children being told not to play in the nice new sandbox.

There was an explanation. There had to be. It could have been a slight temperature change; the egg may have had a crack in it for these few million years; or more likely, some mother's little darling had probably reached his paws in to touch when the guards'

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backs were turned. Whatever the reason, Janet would never believe it.

Within two hours, *The News* had an extra on the street: *Ducky Hatches. Flies Coop!*

The museum's switchboard was jammed. Every woman within fifty miles of Metropolis called to swear she'd seen Ducky in the backyard. The size, shape and color varied with the local dogs and cats, but the insistence was rabid.

"But — but it's impossible!" Buchanan pleaded with the eggshell as he bent over the incubator.

"What's the difference," I blabbered frantically. "The word is out!"

"It's a fraud," thundered Wesley. "That shell was always empty."

"Don't say that, professor." Dudley was very hurt. "He just hatched, that's all," and he smiled benignly — the smile of a believer — at Wesley's confused face.

"Now look here, Jameson," Wesley started to lecture. Then he realized it was no time for logic. "Doolittle, you've got to squelch this thing!" he demanded.

I thought of Janet, and went cold again. I turned to Professor Everett, who hadn't said a word. "I'll make a phone call. Please find Dr. Preston. Try to explain that I didn't — didn't —"

"Don't worry," he said gently, and I made tracks for the conference room to phone Harry Rosenthal, a friend of mine on the *Globe.* Harry was a smart newspaper man. He could kill the story.

"Harry, please! If there is such a thing as friendship," I yelled into the phone, "kill this story! What do you mean it's a federal case?" Then I saw a copy of the paper lying on the table. I froze. The headline was blunt and typically factual: *F.B.I. Joins Search for Beloved Monster.* "Believe me, Harry." I was practically on my knees. "Your wife did *not* see Ducky. No dinosaur was ever in that egg, and — hello? — hello!" He'd hung up.

I raced toward the door, bumping into Buchanan on his way in. Dudley and Everett followed him into the room. "This is terrible. Just terrible!" For a few moments there was silence.

"You don't suppose, Everett, that — that Ducky actually hatched?" Buchanan meant every word of it. I plunked into a chair, my head whirling. Even Buchanan was adding two and two and coming up with five!

"Don't be childish," chided Everett, and I felt better. "But it does seem strange, doesn't it?"

"Gentlemen, you're all scientists!" I fairly shouted. "Use your heads!"

Dudley, the ace eye-witness, winked at me slyly, as if only he

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and I knew the secret. "You can't fool me," he laughed.

"I — I can't *fool* you?" I said a little blankly, and then Janet flew into the room. I ran to her side. "Janet, you don't think I —"

She didn't say a word — just glared, took aim, and let fly with the flat of that right hand of hers. Then she turned and marched out.

"I don't know what to do," I moaned. "I don't know what to do."

"Don't do anything," answered Dudley brightly. "Just wait. Everybody's looking for him. Somebody'll find him."

Somehow, from out of the noise of my pounding heart and the whirl going on inside my head, an idea struggled through. "Dudley, that's it!"

"That's what?" he asked, bewildered.

"I'll find Ducky! Excuse me, gentlemen," I apologized, and headed for my bailiwick in the basement.

Inside the storeroom I absently hung my coat and hat on the outstretched arm of an Etruscan discus-thrower. My head had stopped spinning. It was just sort of numb. I stubbed my cigarette in the already full cornucopia, obligingly held for me by a terra-cotta Roman lady, and sat down to write the story of Ducky's drowning.

I gave the exclusive to a famous commentator and he broke it that very night: "Flash! Here is another exclusive! Ducky the Dinosaur — now get *this:* Ducky has just been found about thirty miles south of Newark." Then he slowed down to appropriate sadness. "But the beloved Ducky found the world too tough. Ducky is dead! And now for some —"

Within twenty minutes every wire service was carrying the story. Reporters, photographers, and eager-eyed witnesses inundated the erstwhile quiet hamlet of Bakersfield, and tied up traffic on U.S. Route 9 for four hours. The Herald-Examiner expressed the public shock: *Ducky Found in Jersey Flats — Dead!* I made arrangements for the phony funeral, and then went to sleep for ten straight hours.

It was a very nice, simple funeral, *sans* corpse, and even Wesley was sad. "I hope when my turn comes I have as nice a one." The service consisted merely in mounting a little wooden plaque beneath one of those niches in the wall of the main lobby, the kind used for busts of famous men. We felt like everybody who ever lost a faithful pet, and somehow the plaque summed it all up:

DUCKY DINOSAUR
Species Brontosaurus
BORN MAY 20, 1952
DIED MAY 22, 1952
AGE: 3,000,000 YEARS

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Later, a stone statue would be placed in the recess for all posterity.

After the funeral, we all gloomily filed back into the board room. Janet sat with her hands folded primly in her lap. She hadn't spoken to me since Ducky took his walk. I wanted to reach out to touch her, but I knew it wouldn't work.

Dudley broke the mood by announcing, wanly, "Well, I better get back into my sweeping clothes," and he left.

Outside, the crowds were weeping like children. A whole romantic dream had ended for them. Buchanan thanked me for getting the museum back on its feet. "Mr. Doolittle, in spite of —"

"Everything?" I said.

"Yes. I suppose now you'll be going back to Doolittle, Banks, Gold and . . . er . . ."

"That's all," I half laughed. The wheel had come full circle.

"And now we can send Dr. Preston to Alaska," said Wesley, breaking out of his cloud of gloom.

"Janet?" I queried. "Alaska?" She shot a quick nervous glance at me, mumbled something about her shiny nose, and quickly left the room.

"This time, though, to look for midget horses." Excitedly, he launched into a peroration; but as far as I was concerned, he was talking to thin air.

Janet was sitting on the stone bench under Ducky's niche in the wall when I found her. "Janet? Is something the matter?" She shook her head, trying to hold back the tears. "You're crying," I said. "Why?" I turned her face to see.

"Don't do that!" she snapped angrily, and started to go.

I pulled her down gently. "Please. I have to talk to you. What's all this Alaska business?"

"You heard Dr. Wesley," she answered, avoiding my eyes.

"Do you like midget horses as much as all that?"

"I hate them!" she said in a high little squeak, and she broke into sobs.

"Is it because you want to get away from me? Have I done something to hurt —"

"Have you done —" She gaped. "You came to Metropolis, tried to hatch a three-million-year-old egg, nearly started a national riot, and now you ask have you done something!"

"You don't really believe I broke that eggshell."

"I suppose not." She shrugged.

"I didn't."

"All right, Luther, you didn't." She got up. "Excuse me. I have to go to Alaska —"

"I don't know how it happened, believe me." I turned her around.

"That's the trouble with you, Luther. You go around lighting firecrackers, and then act per-

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fectly amazed when they go off." She stepped away. "I wish you'd never come to Metropolis. I wish I'd never met you. I wish . . ." and she started to cry again.

"Why?" I asked excitedly.

"Because you've hoodwinked one hundred and sixty million people!" she lashed.

"They love to be hoodwinked," I said softly.

She was trembling with rage. "We just had a funeral for a *dinosaur*," she said in desperation. "Of all things — a dinosaur that was never even *born!*" She worked her mouth, trying to make sense of it. "And still nobody will believe he's dead! I'm not even sure myself!" she wailed. "What's your next step, Mr. Doolittle? Artificial respiration?"

I shook my head. "Ducky's still alive."

"Oh no!" She was frantic. "Not again!"

I drew her down on the bench beside me and explained. "I'm not sorry any of this happened. We gave a lot of people a real live fairy tale — and that's a rare commodity." She wiped a tear from her pouting face. "Everybody spends his life looking for something to believe in. Take me, for example. I've known lots of girls —"

"I believe every word of that." Her chin went up.

"So just when I'd about decided that Cinderella was only a Disney movie, you —"

"Came into my life." She nodded like the traffic cop who's heard all the answers.

"You're ahead of me," I laughed.

"Way ahead." She stood up.

"If I hadn't found you I'd just have gone on looking for you, and —"

Her back was to me. She lowered her head, then turned around and smiled wanly. "Would you, Luther?"

"Absolutely." I pulled her down again. "I can't follow you to Alaska — I get colds too easily." She laughed. "Hello, Cinderella," I said.

"You no-good copywriter," she answered happily.

When I came up for air-I saw it — in that niche in the wall. It was the right color — sort of grey — and the right size, too. Sitting pertly on its hind legs like a squirrel, it *winked* at me — I swear!

"Janet, quick!" I pointed.

She turned to look, dropping her purse. I picked it up and looked back again, open-mouthed. But Ducky had evidently jumped off. At any rate, he was gone.

"It's nothing, darling," she said.

"Yeah. Yeah, it's nothing." Only I wasn't really sure. And I don't think I ever will be.

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Cartoon: Mendoza

"Don't look like they're coming."

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Illustrator: Ernie Barth

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This is about little Tommy, who left India and came to Kansas to live with Aunt Agatha. Living on a poverty-ridden farm didn't bother him much; he had been taught from infancy that the trials of flesh aren't really important. But when his aunt made a production out of killing a housefly . . . well, that's the part to remember the next time somebody says, "This is for your own good," then belts you one in the teeth.

We don't say that remembering it will patch up your molars, but it can show you the way to get even. Just take a practical course based on the principles of Karma, the Wheel of Life, Nirvanah, and the Book of Rishabha, and it will be your *turn to say, "This hurts me more than it does you!" — and make it stick!*

THE COLD GREEN EYE

BY

JACK WILLIAMSON

ANSAS?" The boy looked hard at his teacher. "Where is Kansas?"

"I do not know." The withered old monk shrugged vaguely. "The spring caravan will carry you down out of our mountains. A foreign machine called a railway train will take you to a city named Calcutta. The lawyers there will arrange for your journey to Kansas."

"But I love our valley." Tommy glanced out at the bamboo plumes nodding above the old stone walls of the monastery garden and the snowy Himalayas towering beyond. He turned quickly back to catch the hold man's leathery hand. "Why must I be sent away?"

"A matter of money and the law."

"I don't understand the law," Tommy said. "But please, can't I stay? That's all I want — to be here with the monks of Mahavira, and play with the village children, and study my lessons with you."

"We used to hope that you might remain with us to become another holy man." Old Chandra Sha smiled wistfully behind the

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cloth that covered his mouth to protect the life of the air from injury by his breath. "We have written letters about your unusual aptitudes, but the lawyers in Calcutta show little regard for the ancient arts, and those in Kansas show none at all. You are to go."

"But I don't need money," Tommy protested. "My friends in the village will give me rice, and I can sleep in the courtyard here."

"I think there is too much money, burdening souls with evil karma," the lean old man broke in softly. "Your father was a famous traveler, who gathered dangerous riches. Since the wheel has turned for him, others desire his fortune. I think perhaps that is why the lawyers sent for you."

A fly came buzzing around his dried-up face, and he paused to wave it very gently away.

"But your mother's sister lives in that place named Kansas," he went on. "It is arranged for you to go to her. She is your own race and blood, and she wants you in her home—"

"No! She never even saw me," Tommy whispered bitterly. "She couldn't really want me. Must I go?"

"It is to be." Chandra Sha nodded firmly. "Your people are ignorant about the true principles of matter and the soul, but their own peculiar laws require obedience. The caravan leaves tomorrow."

Tommy wanted not to weep, but he was only ten. He clung sobbing to the thin old Jain.

"But we have instructed you well," the holy man murmured, trying to comfort him. "Your feet are already on the pathway to nirvana, and I will give you a copy of the secret book of Rishabha to guide and guard you on your way."

Tommy went down out of the mountains with the caravan. He was bewildered and afraid, and the motion of the railway cars made him ill, but the lawyers in Calcutta were kind enough. They bought him new garments, and took him to a cinema, and put him on a great strange machine called an airplane. At last he came to Kansas and his Aunt Agatha Grimm.

He rode from the depot to her home in a jolting farm truck, peering out at the strange sun-flooded flatness of the land and a monstrous orange-painted machine called a combine that grazed like the golden bull of Rishabha through the ripe wheat.

The hired man stopped the truck beside a huge wooden house that stood like a fort in the middle of the endless land, and Tommy's aunt came out to greet him with a

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moist kiss. A plump, pink-skinned blonde, with a sweat-beaded face. He was used to darker women, and she seemed incredibly fair.

"So you're Lizzie's boy?" She and her sister had come from Alabama, and soft accents still echoed in her voice. "Gracious, honey, what's the matter?"

Tommy had run to meet her eagerly, but he couldn't help shrinking back when he saw her eyes. The left was warm and brown and kind as old Chandra Sha's. But the right eye was different, a frosty, bluish green; it seemed to look straight through him.

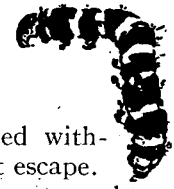
"Well, child, can't you talk?"

He gulped and squirmed, trying to think of words to say in English. But he couldn't think at all. Somehow, the green eye froze him.

"Nothing," he muttered at last. "Just . . . nothing."

"Lizzie's boy would be a little odd." She smiled, too sweetly. "Brought up by jabbering heathens! But this is going to be your home, you know. Come on inside, and let me clean you up."

The hired man brought the carved teakwood chest the monks had given him, and they went into the big house. The smell of it was strange and stale. The windows were closed, with blinds drawn down. Tommy stood blinking at the queer heavy furniture and dusty bric-a-brac crammed into the dim cave of the living room, until he heard a fly buzzing at the screen door behind him. He turned without thinking to help it escape.



"Wait, honey." His aunt caught his arm, and seated him firmly on the teakwood chest. "I'll kill it!"

She snatched a swatter from the high oak mantle and stalked the fly through the gloomy jungle of antimacassared chairs and fussy little tables to a darkened window. The swatter fell with a vicious *thwack*.

"Got him!" she said. "I won't endure flies."

"But, Aunt Agatha!" The English words were coming back, though his thoughts were still in the easy vernacular the monks had taught him. His shy, hesitant voice was shocked. "They, too, are alive."

The brown eye, as well as the green, peered sharply at him. His aunt sat down suddenly, gasping as if she needed fresh air. He wanted to open the windows, but he was afraid to move.

"Thomas, honey, you're upsetting me terribly." Her pale fat hands fluttered nervously. "But I guess you didn't know that I'm not well at all. Of course I love children as much as anybody, but I really don't know if I can endure you in the house. I always said myself that you'd be better off in some nice orphanage."

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Or back with the monks, Tommy told himself unhappily. He could not help thinking that she looked as tough and strong as a mountain pony, but he decided not to mention that.

"But sick as I am, I'm taking you in." Her moist, swollen lips tried to smile. "Because you're Lizzie's boy. It's my duty, and the legal papers are all signed. But the judge gave me full control of you, and your estate, till you come of age. Just keep that in mind."

Tommy nodded miserably and huddled smaller on the chest.

"I'm giving you a decent home, and you ought to be grateful." A faint indignation began to edge her voice. "I never approved when Lizzie ran away to marry a good-for-nothing explorer — not even if his long-winded books did make him rich. Served her right when they got killed trying to climb them foreign mountains! I guess she never had a thought of me — her wandering like a gypsy queen through all of them wicked heathen countries, and never sending me a penny. A lot she cared if her own born sister had to drudge away like a common hired girl!"

Sudden tears shone in the one brown eye, but the other remained dry and hard as glass.

"But what I can't forgive is all she did to you." Aunt Agatha snuffled and dabbled at her fat, pink nose. "Carrying you to all those outlandish foreign places, and letting you associate with all sorts of nasty natives. The lawyers said you've had no decent religious training, and I guess you've picked up goodness knows what superstitious notions. But I'll see you get a proper education."

"Thank you very much!" Tommy sat up hopefully. "I want to learn. Chandra Sha was teaching me Sanskrit and Arabic. I can speak Swahili and Urdu, and I'm studying the secret book of Rishabha —"

"Heathen idolatry!" The green eye and the brown widened in alarm. "Wicked nonsense you'll soon forget, here in Kansas. Simple reading and writing and arithmetic will do for the like of you, and a Christian Sunday school."

"But Rishabha was the first Thirtankara," Tommy protested timidly. "The greatest of the saints. The first to find nirvana."

"You little infidel!" Aunt Agatha's round pink face turned red. "But you won't find — whatever you call it. Not here in Kansas! Now bring your things up to your room."

Staggering with the teakwood chest, he followed her up to a narrow attic room. It was hot as an oven, and it had a choking antiseptic smell. The dismal, purple-flowered wallpaper was faded and

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water-stained. At the tiny window, a discouraged fly hummed feebly.

Aunt Agatha went after it.

"Don't!" Tommy dropped the chest and caught at her swatter. "Please, may I just open the window and let it go?"

"Gracious, child! What on earth?"

"Don't you know about flies?" A sudden determination steadied his shy voice. "They, too, have souls. It is wrong to kill them."

"Honey child, are you touched?"

"All life is akin, through the Cycle of Birth," he told her desperately. "The holy Jains taught me that. As the wheel of life turns, our souls go from one form to another — until each is purged of every karma, so that it can rise to nirvana."

She stood motionless, with the swatter lifted, frozen with astonishment.

"When you kill a fly," he said, "you are loading your own soul with bad karma. And, besides, you may be injuring a friend."

"Well, I never!" The swatter fell out of her shocked hand. Tommy picked it up and gave it back to her, politely. "Such wicked heathen foolery! We'll pray to help you find the truth."

Tommy shuddered, as she crushed the weary fly.

"Now unpack your box," she commanded. "I'll have no filthy idols here."

"Please," he protested unhappily. "These things are my own."

The green eye was still relentless, but the brown one began to cry. Tears ran down her smooth sweet face, and her heavy bosom quaked.

"Tommy! How can you be so mulish? When I'm only trying to take your poor dead mother's place; and me such an invalid!"

"I'm sorry," he told her. "I hope your health improves. And I'll show you everything."

The worn key hung on a string around his neck. He unlocked the chest, but she found no idols. His clothing she took to be laundered, lifting each piece gingerly with two fingers as if it had been steeped in corruption. She sniffed at a fragrant packet of dried herbs, and seized it to be burned.

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Finally, she bent to peer at the remaining odds and ends — at the brushes and paints his mother had given him when she left him with the monks; there were a few splotched watercolors he had tried to make of the monastery and the holy men and his village friends; the broken watch the mountaineers had found beside his father's body; a thick painted cylinder.

"That?" She pointed at his picture of a shy brown child. "Who's that?"

"Mira Bai. My friend." He covered the picture quickly with another, to hide it from that cold green eye. "She lived in my own village. She was my teacher's niece, and we used to study together. But her legs were withered and she was never strong. It was last year before the rains were ended that the wheel turned for her."

"What wheel?" Aunt Agatha sniffed. "Do you mean she's dead?"

"The soul never dies," Tommy answered firmly. "It always returns in a new body, until it escapes to nirvana. Mira Bai has a stronger body now, because she was good. I don't know where she is — maybe Kansas! But someday I'll find her, with the science of Rishabha."

"You poor little fool!" Aunt Agatha stirred his small treasures with the swatter handle, and jabbed at the painted cylinder. "What's that contraption?"

"Just — just a book."

Very carefully, he slipped it out of the round wooden case and unrolled a little of the long parchment strip. It was very old, yellowed and cracked and faded. The mild brown eye squinted in a puzzled way at the dim strange characters. He wondered how much the green one saw.

"That filthy scribbling? That's no book."

"It is older than printing," he told her. "It is written with the secret wisdom of the Thirtankara Rishabha. It tells how souls may be guarded through their transmigrations and helped upward toward nirvana."

"Heathen lies!" She reached for it angrily. "I ought to burn it."

"No!" He hugged it in his skinny arms. "Please don't! Because it is so powerful. I need it to aid my father and mother in their new lives. I need it to know Mira Bai when I find her again. And I think you need it too, Aunt Agatha, to purge your own soul of the eight kinds of karma —"

"What?" The brown eye widened with shock and the green one narrowed angrily. "I'll have you know that I'm a decent Christian, safe in the heart of God. Now, put that filthy scrawl away and

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wash yourself up. I guess *that's* something your verminous monks forgot to teach you."

"Please! The holy men are very clean."

"Now you're trying to aggravate me, poorly as I am." She snuffled and her brown eye wept again. "I'm going to teach you a respectable religion, and I don't need any nasty foreign scribblings to help me whip the sin out of you."

She was very sweet about it, and she always cried when she was forced to beat him. The exertion was really too much for her poor heart. She did it only for dear Lizzie's sake, and he ought to realize that the punishment was far more painful to her than to him.

She tried to teach him her religion, but Tommy clung to the wisdom of the kind old monks of Mahavira. She tried to wash the East out of him, with pounds of harsh yellow soap, until his sunburnt skin had faded to a sickly pallor. She prayed and cried over him for endless hours, while he knelt with numb bare knees on cruel bare floors. She threatened to whip him again, and she did.

She whipped him when he covered up the big sheets of sticky yellow fly paper she put in his room, and whipped him when he poured out the shallow dishes of fly poison she kept on the landing. But she seemed too badly shaken to strike him, on the sultry afternoon when she found him liberating the flies in the screen wire trap outside the kitchen.

"You sinful little infidel!"

Her nerves were all on edge. She had to sit down on the doorstep, resting her weak heart and gasping with her asthma. But her fat pink fingers seemed strong enough when she caught him by the ear.

She called the hired man to bring a torch dipped in gasoline, and held him so that he had to watch while she burned the flies that were left in the trap. He stood shivering with his own pain, quiet and pale and ill.

"Now come along!" She led him up the stairs, by his twisted ear. "I'll teach you whether flies have souls." Her voice was like a saw when it strikes a nail. "I'm going to lock you up tonight without your supper, but I'll be up in the morning."

She shoved him into the stifling attic room. It was bare and narrow as the monastery cells, with only his hard little cot and his precious teakwood chest. His tears blurred the painted carving on the chest — it was the blue snake of the *deva* Parshva, who had reached nirvana

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a very long time before.

She held him, by the twisted ear.

"Believe me, Thomas, this hurts me terribly." She snuffled and cleared her throat. "But I want you to pray tonight. Beg God to clean up your dirty little soul."

She gave his ear another twist.

"When I come back in the morning, I want you to get down on your bended knees with me and confess to Him that all this rot about flies with souls is only a wicked lie."

"But it's the truth!" He caught his breath, and tried not to whimper. "Please, Aunt Agatha, let me read you part of the sacred book —"

"Sacred?" She shook him by the ear. "You filthy little blasphemer! I'm going down now to pray for you. But when I come back in the morning, I'm going to open up your box and take away that heathen writing. I declare, it's what gives you all these wicked notions. I'm going to burn it in the kitchen stove."

"But — Aunt Agatha!" He shivered with a sharper pain. "Without the secret book I can't guide anybody toward nirvana. I can't help my father and mother, struggling under their load of karma. I won't even know little Mira Bai, if I should ever find her."

"I'll teach you what you need to know." She let go his tingling ear, and boxed it sharply. "We'll burn that book in the morning. And you'll forget every word it says; or stay in this room till you starve."

She locked the door on him and waddled down the stairs again, weeping for his soul and wheezing with her asthma. She had a good nip of whisky for her heart, and filled herself a nice plate of cold roast chicken and potato salad before she went up to her own room to pray.

For a long time Tommy sat alone on the edge of the hard lumpy cot, with his throbbing head in his hands. Crying was no use; old Chandra Sha had taught him that. He longed for his father and mother, those tanned happy wanderers he could barely remember. But the wheel had turned for them.

Nothing was left, except the sacred parchment. When the ringing in his punished ear had stopped, he bent to unlock the teakwood chest. He unrolled the brittle yellow scroll. His pale lips moved silently, following the faded black-and-scarlet characters.

The book, he felt, was more precious than all Kansas. He had to save it, to help his reborn parents, and to find Mira Bai, and even to aid his aunt. Her poor soul was laden, surely, with a perilous burden of karma, but perhaps the science of the book could find her a more fortunate rebirth.

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Trembling and afraid, he began to do what the holy men had taught him.

It was the hired girl, next morning, who came up to unlock his room. She was looking for his Aunt Agatha.

"I can't understand it." Her twangy Kansas voice was half hysterical. "I didn't hear a thing all night long. The outside doors are locked up tight, and none of her things are missing. But I've looked high and low, and your sweet old auntie isn't anywhere."

The little boy looked thin and pale and drawn. His dark eyes were rimmed with grime, hollowed for want of sleep. He was rolling up the long strip of brittle yellow parchment. Very carefully, he replaced it in the painted case.

"I think you wouldn't know her now." His shy little voice was rusty and regretful. "Because the wheel of her life has turned again. She has entered another cycle, you see."

"I don't know what you mean." The startled girl stared at him. "But I'm afraid something awful has happened to your poor old auntie. I'm going to phone the sheriff."

Tommy was downstairs in the gloomy front room when the sheriff came, standing in a chair drawn up against the mantle.

"Now don't you worry, little man," the sheriff boomed. "I'm come to find old Miz Grimm. Just tell me when you seen her last."

"Here she is, right now," Tommy whispered faintly. "But if you haven't been instructed in the science of transmigration, I don't think you'll know her."

He was leaning over one of the big yellow sheets of adhesive fly paper that Aunt Agatha liked to leave spread at night to catch flies while she slept. He was trying to help a big blue fly, that was hopelessly tangled and droning in its last feeble fury.

"Pore little young-un!" The sheriff clucked sympathetically. "His aunt told me he was full of funny heathen notions!"

He didn't even glance at the dying fly. But Tommy hadn't found it hard to recognize. Its right eye was a furious, bluish green, and the left was a tiny bead of wet brown glass.

EVERY science has been an outcast.
— Robert G. Ingersol

EQUIPPED with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure Science.
— Edwin Powell Hubble, *Science*

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SOMETHING FOR THE **WOMAN**

BY IVAR JORGENSEN

You're a woman. You've got a husband and a couple of children and a quiet pride in your home and a fair amount of happiness. You don't live on Park Avenue or in Beverly Hills, but you don't want to, really. As long as there's plenty to eat and enough clothing to wear and the full amount of love from the people you love, you're more than satisfied.

Only now they want to take away the foundations of all this. They want you to pull up roots and go traipsing off on a ridiculous hunt for new frontiers. They want you to trade comfort for hardship, security for danger, maybe even life for death.

Why, you demand, should I do it? What's in it for me?

SHE awoke at dawn and her awakening was an instantaneous thing, a sudden and stark transition to sharp consciousness.

And she thought how could I have slept at all? as her hand went automatically across to touch him — and to find him not there. Only the hollowed-out pillow beside her own on the hard floor in the dark, empty room.

She knew a moment of panic; a moment that lifted her and sent her running through the rooms — rooms cold and unfamiliar now in their emptiness — until she saw a streak of blessed light under the basement door.

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He was coming up even as she flung the door open and there was something warm and steadying in the dark form of him against the light below. He said, "Nora," said it quietly, as he always spoke. "You should have slept longer. It may be difficult . . . later."

She did not answer, but stood shivering in her white nightgown, waiting for him, for the nearness of him which she needed so badly.

"Are the children awake too?"

"No — I don't think so."

He laughed; the silent chuckle she could feel rather than hear. "The time we had getting them to sleep. But once gone . . ." His thoughts turned to practical things. "The truck just left. I was listening for them so they wouldn't knock and awaken you."

"They took — the trunks?" It was hard to get the words out. They were so final. Nothing left now but their own four bodies and the clothing in which those bodies would be wrapped. So utterly final.

The whole thing had been somewhat like broad steps, one following another, down into a nightmare of quickening panic.

He looked at her there in the semi-darkness and then she could feel his hands touching her cheeks, lifting her head. "The big day, darling. What was it the senator called it? The *new* day. How does it feel to be one of the immortal hundred? That's what we'll be, you know — immortal."

She was grateful for the darkness as she drew away, turned. "It's chilly. I must get some clothes on."

Alone in what had been their bedroom, she stooped to find her clothing; straightened and drew off the white nightgown; stood there shivering.

A stairway into gradually quickening panic. Not too bad when they had come in twos and threes to look at the house. Not even too bad when the house had been sold, because it was still there and all the familiar things were around her and the future seemed far away.

A little twinge the evening the man came to pick up the car — a slight quickening in her heart. At the last moment she'd remembered Patty's glove in the back seat; had called and gone to the curb to get it — from someone else's car, not theirs any more. Then the man had driven away.

The matter of the furniture had been as painless as such a thing could possibly be. Not a lot of people wandering through, touching, fingering. Just one — a gloomy man, striding in, naming a figure. Sudden, sharp, almost painless.

But they had come finally to haul it away; come with clumping shoes and big, rough, irreverent hands to lift the pieces. With

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them had come the panic, and after they had filled the van and driven it away and the rooms were empty, the panic had remained.

The voices of Patty and Tom had helped a little. The laughing and chattering as they ran about, listening to their voices bounce off the naked walls, making a holiday out of everything. Some help, but only pinpoints of light in the darkness of the panic. Tiny stars against the smothering blanket of the night sky.

The night sky. Now, half dressed, fingers stiff, numb, she refused to think of the sky; dared not think of it, lest the pitiful little wall she'd managed to build up would crumble away completely and the panic would pour down on her like a raging flood.

Great Father in heaven. What idiocy have we agreed to? How insane and foolhardy can we get?

The zipper at the side of her dress gave her trouble. She seized upon the trouble like a thirsting person upon a jug of water and struggled, grim and grateful, with the stubborn tab.

But the tab gave and the zipper came smoothly together and she felt she had lost a friend.

The panic.

But held at bay by the shuffling of sleepy feet as Patty wobbled into the room. "Mom. You there, Mom? Why don't you turn on some lights? Time is it, Mom?"

"It's still early, dear. Why don't you go back to bed for a while?"

Fists in blue eyes. Then the sudden dawning. "Mom! This is it! The day! This is the day, Mom!" Patty whirled and danced away. "Tom! Wake up, sleepy head! This is the *day!* You going to sleep right through it?"

The smell of shag tobacco. The glowing pipe. And she knew he was in the room. She hadn't been aware, somehow, of his coming, but now he was there.

She turned, wanting to run to him and hide in his arms. More than anything in her whole life, she wanted to plead for reconsideration of this horrible thing they were about to do — this mad, insane thing.

But, instead, she slipped to the floor and sat nursing her knees as she drew on her shoes and laced them. She said, "I could hang the bedclothes over the windows. Then we could turn the lights on."

"Turn them on anyway — when you're ready. The children can dress in the bathroom. Maybe the neighbors would like to see how we spend our last morning."

She got to her feet, turning from him as she did so — afraid he would see the sickness welling into her eyes. And the thought was pounding against the walls of her brain.

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Why am I like this — weak and spineless and silent? Why do I suffer so uselessly? Why don't I scream no — no — no — and that would be the end of it? It would be better for all of us.

But she remained silent. She snapped the light switch and the yellow glare against the bare walls swept away the last wisps of unreality the darkness had nurtured. This was the day — the new day. The threshold from which they would leap to madness.

"Mom — can we open the thermos bottles now? We're hungry and you said they were for breakfast."

She hurried from the bedroom, eager for the duty of supervising the meal. "Yes, you may as well. The large one is milk. Use the paper cups and then pour some of it on the shredded wheat under the napkins. You'll find sugar there —"

Tom laughed in the glee of youth and new awakening. "Mom! For criyi! We know how to eat!"

"Well . . . eat slowly. Don't bolt your food."

She opened the smaller thermos and poured coffee into a paper cup and handed it to him. He took it silently and waited until she had poured her own. Nothing was said or indicated, yet she sensed it as being — to him — a toast, a silent drinking between them to the thing they were about to do.

She glanced up now and saw the light of morning on the window pane. With the light came a new sensation — a new dread. Even time itself — she sensed — had joined the dread conspiracy against her and had changed its form. Time had now become a medium of graduating speed like a sled on the south hill in winter; creeping at first, dragging, but gradually increasing its speed until it was rushing inexorably forward toward the end.

Daylight — the last she would see in these rooms — in this house.

The shag tobacco perfumed the air as she gathered up the breakfast things and stacked them in a corner. They would be left there in a neat pile, and later the man who had bought the things would come and pick them up together with the sheets and blankets — to leave the house a mute, forlorn shell.

The relief of Patty's shrill voice. "It's light now, Daddy. Can I go? I'm supposed to say good-bye to Celia. She's getting up early and she's going to be on her porch waiting."

Tom, with importance: "I've got to go too, Dad. I'm giving Eddy my hunting knife. It was over the weight." He spoke with apology because the father had fashioned the knife as a birthday present for the son.

A few ounces of birthday gift

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overweight. Great God! On such absurd trifles hang life and death.

"You can each have fifteen minutes — no more. Be back here sharp and prompt."

They were gone in a clatter while she finished with the dishes and went blindly from the room to gather up the bedding and fold it into patterns of absolute precision. He remained in the room where they had eaten their meal and she sensed his uncertainty, his indecision. She waited, holding a sheet spread motionless. Then his footsteps turned toward the basement steps and went down.

Alone, she stood toe to toe with the panic and slugged at it with flailing mental fists. Sobbing in silence, she gave ground.

The sheets and blankets were folded. The breakfast things aligned and realigned. Time rushed in a fresh acceleration and they were on the sidewalk, the car waiting, the neighbors calling good-byes in blurred unfocused words.

Strangely, the big black limousine brought a respite. The limousine was a moment of rest between rounds of slugging it out with the terror. The car was such a lovely, familiar thing; held tight to the pavement by its four big tires. Sane and sensible, bound by the laws of gravity which man had now learned to defy.

The limousine moved away from the curb and the town was astir. Stores were opening; awnings were being rolled down; sidewalks sloshed with hose water that ran into the gutters and carried a dust film on its back as it moved toward the sewer grates.

She saw all these things as they rode through the streets. The awnings and the water and the dust film; the early shoppers picking over the plump tomatoes and the pale celery on display. Saw and savored them with a feeling akin to desperation, because a woman uprooted must have something to cling to and the mind rushes invariably toward the dear familiar things.

Something to cling to. The man has his courage, his keen and dreaming eye. The child has his new love of living, his wonder at the freshly unfolding world, his flower-petal faith in the goodness of all things. But the woman . . .

How about something for the woman?

The thought formed, but only to be ridiculed by the silent hysterical laughter in her mind. Something to cling to. How absurd, when the very watchwords of this new madness were instability and emptiness. The future was the sky, and the sky sat on nothing. The empty sky. The dark and terrible sky. Nothing.

The limousine stopped by the wire gate. The door opened and

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she got out. And there it was: the great gleaming space ship with the cluster of busy ants around its base; the doughty, cocky, insane little ants who had built it.

The space ship — and panic flooded in.

Oh, no. Not in there. Not trapped and smothered in that monstrous gleaming coffin. No.

The children were silent. They'd seen the ship before, but she knew it was not a thing to become familiar with. No matter how many times it was seen, its majestic lines, the prophetic tilt of it, the things it implied and stood for, would always engender an awed silence.

She was aware now of the crowds watching through the wire fence. The lucky ones who would stay on Earth. She moved along, unresisting, in the directed sweep of the chosen hundred families. The mad ones who would go.

They had erected a platform of adaptable steel tubing and planks because this was a great occasion and the important people — the politicians, the great-brained planners, the spotlight-seekers, the video-screen crowders — would want a place of vantage.

Seats had been provided for the chosen hundred where they could face the platform and listen while the orators told them how lucky they were. Distinguished speakers — one after another — got up before the microphone to confess envy and wax remindful of native heritage, pioneer blood and similar inanity.

She sat listening and there was paradox in the fact that she hated it and yet prayed that it go on and on. Anything to postpone the final walk down the cement ribbon and up into the bowels of that shining nightmare.

She began counting. First the number of people on the platform, then the number who had spoken, subtracting and trying to translate people and words into minutes and seconds of reprieve.

But common sense took over to destroy this pitiful subterfuge. As though the space ship waited upon a shallow wash of words! As though the sweep of sun and planet and asteroid could be held spellbound and waiting by the whisperings of top-hatted ants on a wooden platform.

The equations had been worked out, the molten metal cooled into lean, space-riding patterns; the snarling atomic furnace had been lighted and was, even now, keening in blue-hot agony. The ship would roar away upon a split second timed to the march of galaxies, not the flow of windblown eloquence.

She turned her eyes down the long cement ribbon and a wall grew across it; across the avenue

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to the ship and across her mind; a wall molded steel-strong of the formless panic she'd lived with day and night.

I can't do it. I can't get into that flying coffin and be blasted up off the Earth. I'm a woman with all a woman's frailties and none of the strengths a few rare and wonderful women have been given. They liken us to pioneers crossing Early American plains with oxen and covered wagons. A lie. A trap for the stupid. No matter what hardships they bore, their feet were always close to the Earth they lived on and died on. The solid Earth. Something to cling to. A final warmth to be buried in.

I can't do it.

She would have to tell him; tell him soon, because the talking had ended. The president and the mayor and the senators had gotten up from their chairs and were filing down the steps of the platform. They would go first along the cement ribbon toward the ship and the pioneers would follow.

Already the one hundred chosen families — the ninety-nine husbands with their rare and wonderful women — were getting up from the chairs in respect for the president and the dignitaries. All the brave children were silent, awed with this final moment.

Patty and Tom stood close to each other, staring again at the ship, and the smell of shag tobacco was on the breeze.

He stood beside her, his keen dreamer's eyes, narrowed and finely crow-footed, testing the sky for a sign of good fortune. His mind was already up there — far away.

But he lowered his eyes as the crowd surged forward, leaving a space around them that was comparative isolation. He reached over and took her hand in his and she could see that his mind and heart were not among the stars but there on the ground beside her and very close. He smiled.

The smile went down into her face and from there into her own heart along with the quiet words he spoke. "Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

She should have laughed and had an answer as she had always had an answer when he had spoken thus before — before the panic. But she could not.

"It's true. I've been meaning to tell you. That thing over there is only a space ship. This is nothing but a blasting field. Where we're going and what we're planning to do isn't very outstanding beside the really important thing — that I love you. Loving you is the only complete and satisfactory job I've ever done." The clutch of his hand was tight and warm with her own inside. And she knew what his next word would be before it came.

(*Continued on page 162*)

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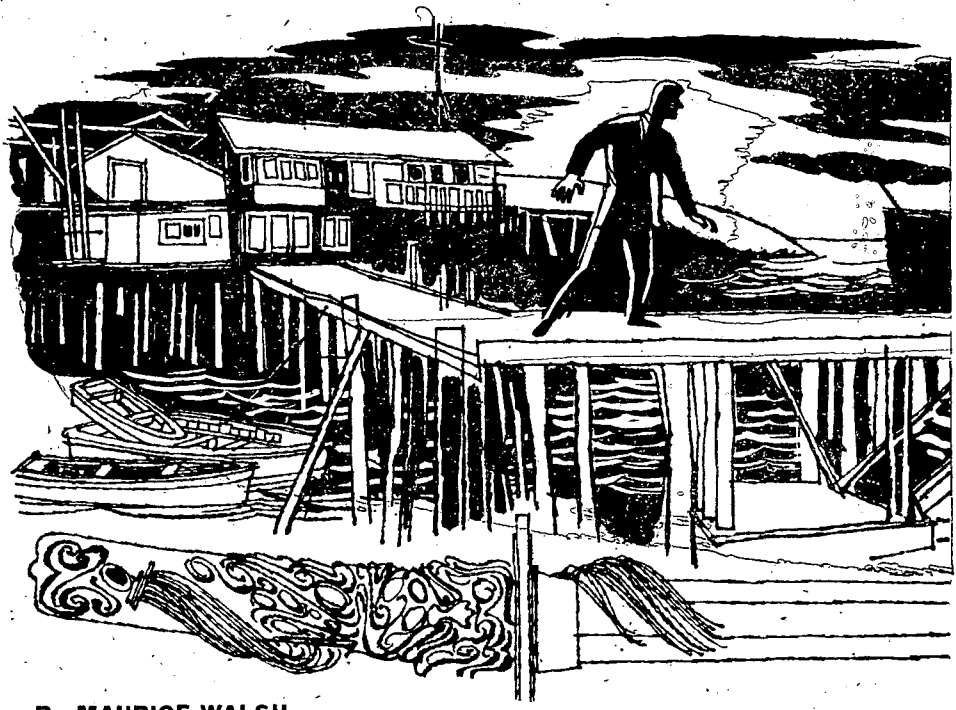

By MAURICE WALSH

THE SWORD OF *Yung Lo*

Nobody tells a story half so well as an articulate Irishman with the heart of a poet. Meaning, in this instance, Maurice Walsh, whose name you've been seeing lately on motion picture screens as the author of The Quiet Man, starring John Wayne. A lot of magazines have rewarded their audiences with the Walsh brand of magic for a good many years now, and it seems only fair that our readers share the wealth.

Against the backdrop of Ireland today, is set the engrossing story of two brothers — twins — who had only one thing in common: their love for the same woman. It seemed no human agency could resolve their problem . . . which left it up to a hunk of cold steel!

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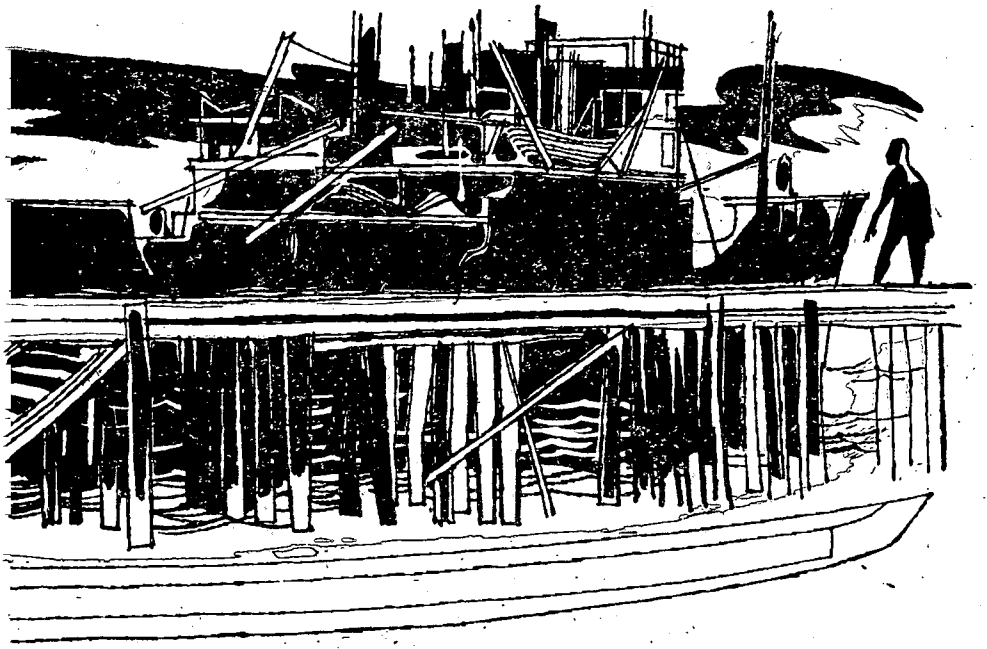

BROTHERS they were, the two of them. And what is more, they were twin brothers; but not similar twins, or identical twins, or whatever the term is. That is in outward appearance; and whether they were sib or not below the surface we shall be seeing if the Lord spares me the use of my tongue.

Larry, the elder by a split minute, was a big, lean, swank lad, with a curly wave of black hair, a face of dark comeliness, and a pair of black eyes with the devil behind them when they set on a shapely woman — or a shapelier bottle of Irish whiskey; and he'd choose the bottle most times. He was good with his hands, and good at games, and the best company in the world, drunk or sober, whether in a saloon bar or a lady's boudoir; a devil to tell a story on the far edge of decency, and with a mellow baritone voice to charm a bird off a bough. And look! he had brains to burn; and could extract the meat out of a text book same as you'd extract a periwinkle out of its shell on the point of a pin.

Timothy — Timmy for short — the other twin, was small by comparison: under middle height, slim and neat in build, fair in the

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skin and fair in the hair, and grey eyes diffident when any woman at all turned head to look at him. As a student he was a steady worker, but slow, and in his leisure hours — not so many — he was given to day-dreaming and versification, save the mark, probably seeing himself a mile high and a mile wide playing the lute to his own song under his lady's window — or inside it.

Their father was a fairly strong farmer away down on the Kerry border, and the only fortune for them was the sort of education that would fit them for the Civil Service. And Civil Service it was.

At the age of eighteen, or it might be twenty, the two of them sat the entrance examination to a certain Department, and as luck would have it they were successful the first time of asking. Big Larry, after a two months' intensive grind, took the first place in all Ireland; and Timmy, after years of plodding, took the nineteenth, which was not the last successful place, but the second last.

In Dublin, they took their humble places in a big office among a score or two of their subhuman species. They went into digs on a quiet street off the Circular Road, and in their own opinion they were on top of the world, the ball at their feet, the field open before them, and the goal of a Secretaryship in the not-too-far distance.

For a beginning, you could not see Larry for dust, with Timmy lost in it far behind. At the end of five or seven years Timmy had a desk of his own in the big office, and a fourth share of a lady typist; but by that time Larry had a room to himself, and a typist and a couple of clericals to jump to his beck and call.

Listen, now! Timmy had a fourth share of a typist, as I said, and, in process of time and propinquity, he wanted more, and then more, for she fitted his dreams to a nicety; and fine dreams he had: his own fire-corner and his slippers warming on the hob, a chess problem at hand, and his lady-of-the-house on the other side of the fire.

Her name was Emer, and she had her share of good looks, with green eyes alive under copper hair; and, besides, she was gay and gallant, with a bit of pleasant devilment at heart. And, mind you, she was liking Timmy, and warming a corner of her heart for him, and warming it a bit more, and a bit more, until —

Ay, until! Until big Larry set eyes on her, and approved of what he saw. By a bit of office maneuvering Larry shifted his own typist, and got Emer promoted into her place. There he had her under his hand and eye, and loosed all his charm on her.

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To make a long story short, Emer fell for Larry good and hard, but not hard enough to suit him. For she was a girl of character and integrity, and the only invitation she would accept, and there were many, was an invitation to the marriage rails. This astounded Larry of the easy conquests, and nettled him too, and put him on his mettle, and made Emer all the more desirable, and finally blinded him into taking the plunge into matrimony.

So Larry and Emer were married. And Timmy, his face calm but desolate, was best man. And Timmy, under instructions, acquired a house for the young couple and, what is more, he went to live with them. He did not want to live with them, desperately he did not want that; and Emer did not want it either, for she knew how Timmy felt, and was sorry for him — and a bit ashamed of herself. But Larry was his usual dominant self, and had his own way — as usual.

"Sure, Timmy boy," said he, "haven't we been together all our lives, sharing everything together, and why should we change now?" He slapped Timmy on the back. "Begod sir! there is nothing I would not share with you — nothing at all, and that's flat."

Emer had three children — two sons and a daughter — in ten years. And in the same ten years her husband, big Larry, went all to hell — but eternal hell not yet.

He was a brilliant devil, and his superiors were slow in finding out his shortcomings, but they got round to them in time. Larry was a hard drinker on the road to dipsomania; he was a gambler prepared to cheat; he was a philanderer without morals. He made reckless mistakes that even his ability could not cover; he was demoted from his grade, pulled himself together, was promoted again, and again lapsed; and at the end of ten years he was ignominiously dismissed.

It did not worry Larry. His disgrace slipped off him like water off a duck's back, for he was become a depraved man, and morals no longer had any meaning for him — if they ever had. He lived unashamedly and shamelessly, smugly and boastingly, like — like a deposed monarch — on his brother and on his own wife.

There was nothing the two could do about it. Indeed, there was nothing they wanted to do; for, if the truth must be told, the sort of equilibrium that was achieved at the Sandymount villa suited Timmy and Emer well enough. The house was by no means unhappy, and don't think it was — apart from a natural frustration.

Big Larry was seldom at home, maybe twice in a month to replenish the exchequer, a thing

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Timmy was ever ready to do to be rid of him. And once he was three months away, in Mountjoy Jail, for driving off and wrecking another man's car.

Timmy, who had taken charge of household affairs from the very beginning, merely went on with the job. He was fond of Emer in his own steadfast way, and he grew fond of Emer's children. He played about with them, took them to the zoo on a frequent Sunday in summer, took their mother to the pictures or a play at the Abbey once a week, and on an occasion stood her a slap-up dinner in Jaminet's Restaurant. Begod sir! it looked like an ordinary, unromantic married establishment in suburbia, with husband and wife living amicably together, and the black sheep of the family turning up occasionally with a hard-luck story.

No doubt certain scandalous tongues went awagging, but without reason.

Timmy's worth in his Department was slowly recognized, but then wholeheartedly. From nine to five, five days a week, he was the perfect administrator: exploring every avenue, reaching a conclusion slowly, altering a decision like a mountain in travail and then bringing forth the mouse like a clap o' thunder. He could devise, create and promulgate an official form to be signed three times in triplicate, with a questionnaire that no taxpayer could fill in short of one brainstorm — maybe two. He could keep a file alive longer than any other official anywhere; and there was one famous file, pride of the service, that took four messengers and a wheelbarrow to get borne into the Presence on ceremonial occasions.

Timmy went on and on, and up and up: from Junior to Higher Executive, to Principal, with an Assistant Secretaryship within his grasp, and a Secretaryship in the offing.

Outside office hours, you would take him for a staid and law-abiding denizen of one of the deserts of suburbia. But you wouldn't be too sure if you knew the two little hobbies he was proclivated to. Ay! Two hobbies, but you might call one of them a vice.

That doubtful hobby was drink. And the king of all drinks for male men: ten-year-old Irish whiskey. Ah-ha! you will say, the twin in him! Maybe so. But where one twin was a profligate dipsomaniac, the other was a continent imbiber, regulating his drink as he regulated his work.

Once a month, no more and no less, on a certain Saturday evening after tea, Timmy depraved his neat little body by investing it in the shabbiest, shapelessest old suit o' tweeds ever handed

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down from a secondhand shelf; twisted a blue bird's-eye muffler round his collarless neck; stuck a dirty-shiny peaked stevedore cap over one eye, and disappeared from respectable purlieus for thirty hours.

Where did he go? I'll tell you that too. He went into town, he crossed the Liffey, he went down by the Quays, he took two turns to the left and one to the right, and slipped in by the lounge door of a certain hotel and hostelry.

Maybe it was a fourth-rate hotel; maybe it was a low pub; but it was not a mean one. Good order was kept, as gentlemen to gentlemen, and the liquor was the best, and the best only. No woman, virtuous or spendthrift, was allowed inside the door of bar or lounge. Men only, and not every man either, had a right to put a foot on the brass rod or wallop an emphatic fist on a scarred table-top; sea-worthy men, writing Johnnies on the make, and those wonderful working men of Dublin who could out-talk Villon, and down pints of Guinness to the confoundment of biologists who hold that the capacity of the human stomach is only a quart-and-a-half. One of them, one time, on a bet, drank five pints in five minutes, a thing contrary to nature.

"You did it, Jerry," says his backer, "but it was a dam' close thing." "It was so," agreed Jerry through the high tide in his thrapple, "but I knew I could do it. Sure, I tried it up at the Red Cow before coming along here. Yes, sir!"

Timmy would slip in quietly looking at no one, take the same chair in the same quiet corner, and lift one finger.

And to the lift of Timmy's finger a barman would bring across a ball o' malt, a glass of ten-year-old Irish, pale-straw in colour; and Timmy, slowly and meticulously, would add a modicum of ten drops of water, and toss the mixture straight down on the pit of his stomach; and again lift the one finger. He would do the same thing with the second ball o' malt, and the identical same thing with the third one. But not with the fourth — never with the fourth.

He would look at the fourth on the table-top, and smile at it in a friendly fashion, and sit up as if waking out of a day-dream. And after a while he'd rise slowly to his feet, move with slow dignity to the long bar where a place was waiting for him, put a foot on the brass rod and an elbow on the zinc, and in a voice resonant as a clarion enunciate something like this.

"Ned Keogh yonder, usually accurate, was holding forth last month that the mongoose fighting the king cobra owes its safety

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Illustrator: Bill Ashman

entirely to its activity. That is not so, Edward my friend. Mongooses — not mongeese you will note — mongooses in the death-struggle with their inveterate enemy are frequently wounded, but possess a large degree of immunity to the deadly venom. I recall an incident that I personally observed at Ahmednugger in the Province of Bombay . . ."

Ay, begad! And the furthest he ever was outside Ireland was the Kish Light off Dublin Bay — in a rowboat.

I'm telling you: when Timmy got to his fourth drink he began to be the grandest company within the four seas of Erin. He had an extraordinary volume of tone, and could shake the cobwebs off the ceiling with ballads like *Behold Phelim Broady* and the *Battle of Keimeneigh;* he would stand a drink here and take a drink there, and propose a toast with humour and felicitation; he would enter into a learned discussion of any subject under the sun, listening to another man's points with impatient courtesy and producing his own with courteous authority. And, invariably, he illustrated his theses with some outrageous incidents that had befallen him in foreign parts: the Headwaters of the Nile, the Cordilleras of Patagonia, or any dam' place so long as it was far enough off. Ay faith! the finest company in all Dublin while the bout lasted. . . . But let a veil be drawn. . . .

Thirty hours was his dead limit. At midnight on Sunday he slipped away like the Arab of old, steady as a rock on his feet; took the

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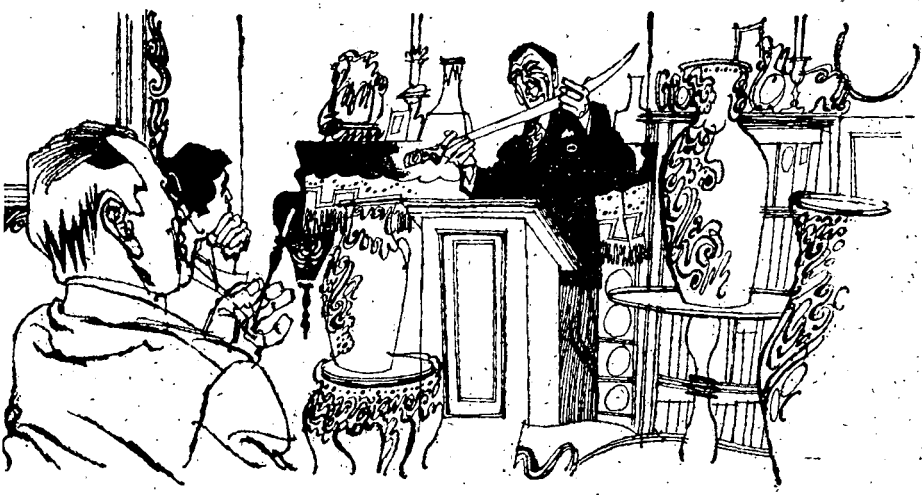

three turns on to the Quays wide and easy; crossed the Liffey by the Butt Bridge; perambulated the three miles out to Sandymount; and so to bed.

And on Monday morning he shaved and bathed, clothed himself in official buckram, and sedately proceeded to his devastating pursuit of useless ratiocination for another month.

But take note of this: from the time that he had reached his fourth drink on Saturday evening until he waked up on Monday morning he suffered a complete blackout: a blankness like a wall where no faintest shadow of memory was ever cast. Let it be.

Timmy's other little proclivity was a real hobby. He was a hoplologist. Hoplology! There is a Society, with world-wide correspondents, called *The Right Worshipful Company of Hoplologists*. The word hoplologist is from the Greek, of course, and it means a collector of weapons — not firearms, but swords and similar instruments of evil: every class of weapon to slit a throat, cleave a head or pierce a wame.

Up in the double-attic of the house at Sandymount, Timmy had a sample of every blame weapon you could put a name to, and some you never heard of: broadsword, claymore, sabre, cutlass, rapier, small-sword, falchion, scimitar, yataghan, talwar, kukri, kvis, sumarai halberd, battle-axe, assegai, and I don't know how many more, arranged in patterns on the wall, catalogued and cross-indexed in Civil Service fashion,

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and with a history attached, where possible.

He had a rust-eaten iron sword that Sigurd of Caithness bore at the battle of Clontarf in 1014 before Murrough slew him; he had a Dervish spear that had killed a 21st Lancer in the gorge at Omdurman, and had gone within an ace — Ochone, the day! — of killing Winston Churchill, who was a war correspondent at the time; he had an Andrea Ferrara that had flashed down the line at Fontenoy and fallen from the dead hand of a clansman on Culloden Moor; he had — I don't know all he had, but they were a blood-thirsty collection sure enough; and Timmy used to handle and gloat over them in blood-thirsty day-dreams.

There was, however, one notorious weapon that he had not got, and that he, or any hoplologist the world over, would give half his collection to possess. That was the personal sword of one of the Chinese Emperors — the Doom Sword — the Blade of a Thousand Cuts — the sword that was never drawn except to destroy evil.

There is mention of thirteen of these all down history and tradition. Four of them have never been identified; eight of them are in museums or private collections; the thirteenth — the sword of Yung Lo, the son of Chu Yuan-Chang of the Ming Dynasty — was looted from a palace in Peking that time Chinese Gordon set out to show the Oriental the benefits of opium and Western Civilization.

Timmy's notion was that the sword had been swiped by a British soldier and, ultimately, it might be found hanging about in some old manor house of military tradition anywhere in England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland — and Ireland for choice; for sure an Irish soldier would loot the cross off an ass's back in foreign parts.

That is why Timmy took a day off to visit every auction of old houses and old furnishings within reach of Dublin.

Now we are coming to the crux. On a certain Saturday, Timmy caught a bus that took him down to view an old house and furniture up for auction on the Wexford border. The forefathers of that old house had been with Cromwell at Clonnel, and William at Steenkirk, and Marlborough at Malplaquet — and, finally, with Chinese Gordon in the opium wars. And, of course, there was a bundle of old weapons tied with a piece of rope.

You know well what happened. Dambut! the Sword of Doom was in that careless bundle of old iron.

The bundle was propped in a corner of the big hall amongst a lot of old junk. At the back of the

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bundle a tall hilt stood up from the other hilts: a two-handed hilt without a guard, and it was that hilt-without-a-guard that gave Timmy his first flaming hint of the prize. He couldn't believe his eyes.

Was it too good to be true? But true it was, and in two minutes Timmy made sure, his heart beating hard and high.

He knew all there was to be known about Yung Lo's sword: the guardless hilt, with the two little ivory household gods of the Emperor caught under the guilt wrapping, the Emperor's sign-writing bitten deep on the back of the blade just below the hilt, the shallow channel at each side of the heavy back, the half-inch of curvature on the lower half of the blade, the square-cut tip: they were all there.

Timmy drew eighteen inches of the blade from its sheath, gave the hilt a little jerk, and listened for a dulled tinkle. He heard it. That was the final proof, for the tinkle came from a sealed, longitudinal chamber in the back of the blade below the point of balance, where steel pellets ran free in a ball-race, so as to add power to the slash.

As usual, the junk was kept for the end, and the bundle of swords was the final item put up for sale. The auctioneer would have put up the bundle at any time if Timmy had approached him, but Timmy did not, for he was afraid of attracting attention to his find.

About dusk the auctioneer made a washing motion with his hands. Devil the thing he knew about hoplology, but he would be facetious after the manner of his tribe.

"The final item, ladies and gents, and someone is due for a bargain." His voice rang clear but hoarse, and no wonder. "Here now is a historic set of bone-breakers: the sword of Brian Boru, who knows! or the slasher of our noble Sarsfield, or Wolfe Tone's stainless blade! Who'll bid me twenty pounds the lot?"

Some dealer chuckled.

"Come on! I'm not waiting. Start the ball rolling with fifteen quid? Ten? Five then? No! Very well then! I'll not waste any more time. Who'll bid me a pound?"

Timmy lifted a quiet forefinger.

"A pound, sir!" The auctioneer smashed down his mallet. "A bargain I said, and a bargain it is. They are yours for a pound. Take them away, sir — and kill your man with any of them."

Timmy paid his pound, and wrestled the bundle of swords. They weighed like the very devil too, but the bus stop was at the lodge gates only a hundred yards away. However, before he got there he came on a thick clump of shrubbery. Without hesitation he dodged round to the back of it, extracted his royal sword care-

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fully, and carelessly tossed its humble companions under the overhang of a bush. Then he fitted his sword of doom under the wing of his overcoat, with the long hilt standing up by his ear, and away with him back to Dublin, exultation bubbling in him.

It was six o'clock on a rainy October evening when he got there, but the high spirit in him did not mind the rain. The occasion surely called for a bit of a celebration, and for a start he treated himself to a slap-up meal in Jaminet's: milk-fed chicken and Limerick ham, washed down by a tall bottle of Liebfraumilch–1934, a good year and a heady wine.

At first he had intended to ring up Emer to join him; and then he decided not to; and after a while he was glad he hadn't. And I'll tell you why.

It had been his intention, also, to go straight home after his meal, and bestow his precious sword in a safe place. But, as I said, Liebfraumilch is a heady wine and, already, the revived little maggots of desire were wriggling in Timmy's brain and spinal column. And as is the way with men in the early stages of thirst, he made excuses to himself. He wanted the boys to see and admire his find, and he'd stay only one hour anyway.

So he went down to the washroom in Jaminet's, removed his gent's collar, twisted a silk handkerchief loosely about his neck, knocked a dent in his respectable bowler hat; and hied himself down by the Quays, his sword under coat and the hilt by his cheek. And begod, sir! already the little idol gods under the lacing were beginning to whisper: queer, guttural little mutterings right into the drum of his ear.

Timmy took his three turns as usual, slipped through a lounge door and, took his seat in his usual quiet corner. He laid his sword on the scarred board, and lifted one finger.

Timmy did not reach his fourth ball o' malt tonight. At the third he rose majestically to his feet, reached for the two-handed hilt. The rich voice resounded.

"Gentlemen, behold the Doom Sword of Yung Lo, son of Chu Yuan-Chang, Emperor of China! Let me demonstrate."

The great sword came swooping out of its broken sheath, and every man there got out from under.

One thing is certain: that night will not be soon forgotten in that low pub. By a miracle, no blood was shed. There was harangue that went back and forth over ten centuries; there were recountings of strange and bloody incidents, and there were demonstrations to the risk of life and limb. The only neck that suffered was the neck of a Gold Label whiskey bottle, and that went clean as a whistle through a mirror at a cost to

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Timmy of thirty bob. Bedad sir! it was an ignoble performance for a sword that had never been wielded but for the extirpation of evil.

The pledged hour went by, and ten more with it. Indeed, the usual time went by, and at midnight Timmy slipped away as usual, still biled as an owl, but as steady as an archbishop on his feet.

The rain was coming down heavens-hard; and Timmy pulled his coat collar about his ears and snuggled his cheek against the sword hilt. And again he heard little guttural murmurings in his ear.

You will not believe this. It might only have been the drink talking in Timmy but, as sure as death, the mutterings of the idol-gods were no longer indistinct; he could pick out words and phrases.

Chang in one blow — Kuo-Sing, and a thousand cuts — still I thirst — all knots I cut — give me air and a neck of evil — air and a neck of evil. Over and over again. And it might be possible, if only dimly, that there came to Timmy the thought of a neck of evil. . . .

He came round by the long façade of the Custom House, where the tall lamps glistered on the pavements and glistered on the roily waters of the turbid and turgid Liffey. One of Guinness' steamboats, piled high with porter barrels, was moored close to the quay wall ready to go out with the morning tide. The rain was still pouring, and no one, not even a cat, moved on the glareing asphalt.

Wrong. Two men moved. Timmy was one, and another man also. As Timmy faced towards the parapet, another man came round it from the bridge. And that man was his twin brother, Larry.

Larry was bareheaded, and his black hair gleamed wetly under the lamp. However drink had besotted his mind, it had never coarsened his body. He was a lean limb of Satan, with gleaming black eyes and a strangely austere mouth: a distinguished-looking devil, as many devils are.

The two brothers, the big and the little, stopped and faced each other. The only sounds were the quiet sough of the falling rain, and a thin, cold tinkle of raindrops from the railway bridge high overhead. And in that waiting hush, Timmy heard an urgent whisper in his ear: *The evil neck only! Give me the air.* That was the whisper.

Then Larry spoke, throwing up his hands in pleased surprise, and there was pleasure and surprise in his voice too: "Well, oh well! My lucky night, and no doubt about it — brother Tim on the loose, and myself in need of him."

Ay, his lucky night! Timmy said nothing, for he was trying to

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draw his mind away from the alluring whisper in his ear: *For the neck of evil I take the air.*

"Sure I ought to have known you were my twin under the skin," said Larry. "Mandear, have you anything good in mind?"

"Good or evil — I do not know," said Timmy deeply.

"A matter of outlook, the same good or evil," said Larry agreeably, and his hand moved invitingly. "There's a place I know not far from here, and you can make your own choice. Come along with me, you gay devil!"

"I will not come with you." Timmy's voice was strong and definite, and then low and urgent. "Go your own road, you blind fool — and go now."

"Ah-ha! You're on a trail of your own, are you? Very well so!" Larry was still agreeable, but now came promptly to his own need, one hand out confidently. "Would you have the loan of a fiver for me, Timmy boy?"

"I have not," said Timmy, shaking his head against the insidious murmur that would not be silent.

"Murder alive!" cried Larry. "But surely you'll have a quid or two to help me over the night?"

"I have no money on me," said Timmy, and that was true. And some small, sane inner self was crying desperately: *Oh God! if I only had a pound for him he would go away.*

"You're a bloody liar!" said Larry warmly. "You were never short of a fiver in all your born days."

"Tonight I am," said Timmy, and his voice lifted. "Get out of my road!"

Quickly he took two paces aside, but alas! Larry was just as quick; and again the two brothers faced each other, almost breast to breast.

Timmy drew in his breath hissingly, and his hands came up towards the long hilt. But at the last moment sanity flashed again; his hands dropped, and he took two paces backwards. Behind him was the Liffey, and the edge of the quay not three yards away.

Larry thrust his head forward, and put his hands on his hips. Here was threat of rebellion. Poor Timeen! All the times he had threatened revolt, and all the times he had caved in — as he would cave in now.

"You haven't drink taken, Timeen?" he inquired half-mockingly.

"Buckets," said Timmy. And buckets was right.

Larry laughed unbelievingly. He had never seen Timmy under the influence, in that queer, insanely sober state beyond the far edge of mere drunkenness.

"Wherever you got the courage," said Larry, "you will not deny your brother for the first

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time in your life."

"Ten years ago I should have denied you," said Timmy. And in a flash he realized what a desolation those ten years had been, a desolation where two frustrated lives had moved forlornly on broken wings, and where he himself had been driven to drinking for the surcease of misery.

Is he going to be troublesome — I don't want to manhandle the little tomcat, said Larry to himself. He took a quick glance up and down the quays to see if the coast was clear, and it was. Unluckily for someone, the coast was clear. Then he turned to Timmy and took a stride forward.

"Take one other step," said Timmy warningly. He braced his legs, and his hands came up chin high. And the whisper in his ear: "*The air now — now — now!*"

"You and your foolish old gut-sticker!" sneered Larry, anger rising in him. "Very well then! You go your way, and I go mine, a fiver in my pocket." His voice snarled. "Out with it!"

"Go your own road, you doomed fool!" said Timmy throatily.

And then, a flame of insane rage leaped in Larry, as it will leap in a man long soaked in alcohol. His hands and his voice lifted, and the power of words came to him.

"You ungrateful pup dog, that I cherished in my bosom all your useless days! You destroyer of house and home, that set me wandering the streets, a damn'd soul! You hanger-on to the apron

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strings of another man's wife! You twin-brother to a cuckold! Do you know what I am going to do to you now? Shake the last farthing out of you, and pitch your miserable carcass into the Liffey tide."

"You foul-mouthed liar —"

That is all that Timmy had time to say, for Larry launched forward, his hands out to clutch and wrench.

But Timmy was not there. Timmy side-stepped lithe as an eel, and Larry stopped himself a stride from the edge of the quay, unbalanced for a moment, head and hands thrown forward.

Something flashed in the air; something gave an exultant double-cry; something, of its own volition, swooped and checked

"Anything wild?"

and swooped on. The force of that terrific swoop whirled Timmy round, and round again. He staggered, balanced precariously, and steadied himself on the very edge of the quay. He was looking down into the water. The water flowed sternly, turbidly, and heaved itself sullenly against the stern of the steamer moored against the quay wall. And the only thing that moved was the water.

Timmy straightened up and turned round. He was alone. Up and down the wide quay nothing moved.

"My God! what mad vision was that?" he said aloud.

On Monday morning Timmy awoke out of a dreamless sleep; and, as usual; his mind was a blank wall where no faintest shadow was cast of anything that had befallen since his third whiskey on Saturday; nor did any weight of gloom press on him from the unconscious.

But he remembered his Sword of Doom all right. There it was, laid carefully along the top of his dressing table. He got out of bed, and examined it with growing satisfaction. The veritable article, as he could prove to any envious hoplologist who dared to challenge. And no damn'd Communist government could claim the sword either.

The hilt and the devilish little gods were still damp from the

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night's rain; so was the broken sheath; so was the blade when he drew it; and one faint, pinkish-orange stain was drying in one of the grooves. Timmy did not even speculate as to what that stain might be. He went to the bathroom, cleaned and polished the sword, and hung it in the hot-press so that it would dry out thoroughly.

Thereafter he shaved and bathed, attired himself in official buckram, ate a hearty breakfast, told Emer of his find, glanced at the morning paper, and proceeded decorously to his devastating, many-branched, but fruitless labours.

Listen now, you remember that Guinness boat by the quay wall. It cast off that morning to take Dublin stout to thirsty Anglo-Saxons. The propellor blades threshed for two seconds, checked and stuck, and stayed stuck. So they sent an investigator down to see what the trouble was. Within an hour a diver discovered the gruesome cause of the stoppage. Within another hour the poor mangled remains were on the quay wall. The threshing scoop of a propellor blade was not merciful to frail humanity. An arm was torn away, so was a foot. *The head was also missing.*

A nameless body? No. A few sodden papers and an envelope or two gave name and address. And so, early that afternoon Emer and Timmy identified the remains. That was not so difficult. There was a broken finger badly set, and there was a characteristic mole below the left shoulder blade. Timmy, the twin, had a similar mole in the same place. And Timmy, the twin, had no inkling as to how his brother had died.

He had no inkling then. And he has no inkling now. And he has not taken a single ball o' malt since that fateful week-end. He no longer feels the craving for one. But if ever he downs four balls o' malt one on top of the other . . . ? I wonder!

The Third Guest

(Continued from page 36)

very clean bones of the other half turkey were piled up in a meticulous fashion, which could only have been done by somebody who had enjoyed his meal with the profoundest of delight and the very greatest of satisfaction.

Looking at these two piles of cleaned turkey bones, Macario's wife, thick tears welling out of her sad eyes, said: "I wonder — I just wonder who he had for dinner. Whoever he was, he must have been a fine and noble and very gentle person, or Macario wouldn't have died so very, very happy."

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STOP ON THE RED

By FRANKLIN GREGORY

What goes on in newspaper offices? You think maybe the editor gets a hot tip, puts all the weight of his vast experience behind it and comes up with a front page yarn that cleans out City Hall?

No, sir!

The way it's really done is laid bare, for the first time, in the next few pages. Possibly the man in the white apron has exaggerated slightly; you know how barkeeps are on a slow night. But the story itself must *be true. Franklin Gregory, who wrote it, was, as the saying goes, once a newspaperman himself . . . and we don't have to tell you what sticklers* those *boys are for the truth. But more than that, Mr. Gregory has twice traveled around the globe — and we don't mean the globe in the reading room of the New York Public Library!*

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Illustrator: Charles Berger

YES, SIR, I guess this is the only bar in the world with a traffic light on it. And since you've mentioned the subject, it's going to cost you an even buck. Right in that little slot at the top, my friend — and I know the boys will thank you. It's for the Al Ladd Pension Fund.

Another Manhattan? Okay, but I better warn you. This traffic light's showing green now, but any time I think you've had your limit, I switch her to red — like this, see? That way you know you aren't supposed to ask for any more and that you won't get it if you do ask, and that way neither one of us has any trouble.

Crazy? Well, that's what some of the boys thought when we first rigged her up. But you'd be surprised how well she keeps them in order. They're newspaper fellows, you know. That's why they call this the Blue Pencil Club.

Who's Al Ladd? Now that's a fair question, since you've invested your money in him, and you being a stranger. Well, sir, Mr. Ladd is one of the finest, most generous newspapermen Philadelphia ever saw. There's not a member of this club, my friend, who at one time or another hasn't enjoyed a mighty big favor from him — a loan to tide him over, perhaps; maybe even his job. So now that the old gentleman is in what you might call personal distress . . . well, we have this fund. . . .

This light, now — Old Four-Square, he calls her — used to belong to Mr. Ladd. The city really owned her, I suppose, when she was perched up there by the old *Morning Post* Building on Broad Street, bossing six lanes of

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traffic north and south and four lanes east and west. But if ever a man had a mistress . . .

You'll notice that I speak of her in the female gender. Mr. Ladd — he and I are closer than twins, you know — that's the way he likes it.

The time he brought her in here, for example, he says: "Joe . . ." Joe's the regular steward, but he's off today. Mr. Ladd says: "Joe, I guess the old girl's lost her virtue at last. I guess we all do," he says, and he sighs. "But if she can still show the light to some of these youngsters," he says, "there'll be use to her yet. So take care of her, Joe."

He'd just been let out as city editor of *The Morning Post*, you understand, and being along in years he couldn't get another steady job, though he does get in a day's work now and then, mostly around the club here. Anyway, that's why he spoke like he did. But it's a damn lie that he brought her in here as a sort of de luxe tin cup. There are some men who will do anything for a buck, but not Mr. Ladd.

Bringing her here was Joe's idea. Joe had known about her, of course, before. Mr. Ladd would drop in here for a nightcap after putting the paper to bed, and he'd talk about her. Only to Joe and a couple of the guys, of course.

The first time he mentioned her, he says in that quiet voice of his: "Joe, people sure are crazy." And he goes on to tell how he can see this traffic light from his city room on the third floor. He says: "I'll swear that both the drivers and the pedestrians think she plays favorites against them, taking such a long time to make up her mind to turn from red to green. Why, some of those fool drivers even honk at her. But by golly, I put a stop watch on her tonight, and I'm bound she's the most impartial thing I ever saw. I wish my reporters were half as impartial as she is."

One night some reckless driver — "impatient and maybe out of spite," Mr. Ladd says — sideswiped the standard she was perched on.

"Joe," Mr. Ladd says, "that hurt me *here*." And he clutched his stomach.

And there was the time, too, when a cub reporter went off the beam in writing up some controversial story. Editorialized, you know. So Mr. Ladd leads this kid over to the window and points down to Old Four-Square and says: "Son, no good reporter ever plays favorites. You do just like that light does and give both sides."

And do you know, just three years later that youngster won a Pulitzer prize!

Up to about then, Mr. Ladd never saw anything in that traffic light except a symbol of a square

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deal — a sort of lighthouse beacon, you might say, confirming the rightness of the way he did things. All the years he'd been with *The Morning Post* he'd been a fair-minded city editor of the old school. He had a mortal fear of libel, and if he was in doubt about a story, he'd spike it. And that's the way *The Post* was, too. Why, they used to call *The Morning Post* "The Daily Tombstone", and some of the wise guys even called Mr. Ladd "The Gravedigger".

But hell's bells, you have to admit that no newspaper — or newspaperman, either — ever gets anywhere by just plodding along doing the correct thing day after day. They both have to keep up with the times, and that means that if one paper has got a lot of zing and imagination and dishes out a lot of scandal, then the opposition has to get some bigger zing and dish out bigger scandal.

So finally the time came when *The Morning Post* started losing circulation, which means it started losing advertising, which means the owners started losing money. So they got together one day and called the editor and the managing editor and Mr. Ladd in on the carpet.

They said: "Gentlemen, to look at our paper you'd think we were back in the horse-and-buggy days. But, gentlemen, this is the atomic age, so let's splash some atomic news over the front page. "Gentlemen," they said, "get out the big type and the red ink and the leg art and let's run stories with some zing." And they looked squarely at Mr. Ladd and said, "And if anybody on the staff hasn't the guts to do it, we'll find men who have."

You can see how that put poor Mr. Ladd on the spot, him being of the old school. Any newspaperman knows, of course, that in a city this size scandals come a dime a dozen. And you can always start a crusade at the drop of a hat — against sin, dope, the cops, grafters, or what have you. But the thing is: can you *prove* it when the chips are down? That's what always worried Mr. Ladd. He was just as anti-sin and pro-scandal as anybody, but he wanted to be fair, too, and like I say, he had that mortal fear of libel. So he started to sweat with worry.

It was a couple of weeks, maybe, after the new rules started, that Mr. Ladd, with the bulldog deadline behind him, went out for a bite to eat. The paper had been brightening up all right, just gory with red ink and big headlines. And they were running cheesecake on the front page and a couple pages of more girlie pictures inside. And they'd bought some new comics and features from a New York syndicate, and hired a couple of new rewrite men and feature writers who knew how to sling the

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jazzy words. And instead of running the divorce actions on the obituary page like they used to, they slapped 'em on page one, too, even if it was only Annie Jones the five-and-dime girl who nobody ever heard of.

This night I'm talking of, Mr. Ladd had a real problem and it didn't make his digestion any better. The State cops had moved into town and raided a gambling joint where they found two City Councilmen and one of the town's biggest merchants shooting craps with Hangnail George, the big-time gambler. There was fifteen thousand bucks on the table, and the State cops took that for evidence and pinched Hangnail George and some small fry who were playing ten-cent ante at the next table, but they flagged the biggies.

Well, hell, it wasn't any news that Hangnail George and a handful of lousy punks had been pinched again. It was the Who's Who that was news. But they weren't booked, the State cops trying to protect them by failing to pinch them. And yet the reporter who turned in the story had the names and all, and Mr. Ladd knew he was thoroughly reliable and that his source was impeccable.

As if all this wasn't a big enough poser, the business man — it was R. Farthington Clancy III — was one of *The Morning Post's* biggest advertisers, and the Councilman belonged to the Good Government Party which the paper was always thumping the drum for.

The whole mess outraged Mr. Ladd's sense of justice. He told Joe that the headline he really wanted to run, if he could run the story at all, was: "WHY THIS FAVORITISM? DOES MONEY TALK?"

Well, he finished his supper and he was standing outside on the street corner, still undecided what to do about this borderline story, and there was Old Four-Square perched up on her iron standard, and Mr. Ladd gave the standard a friendly pat just for old time's sake.

"And then, by Harry, I felt all my troubles go away," Mr. Ladd told Joe later that night when he came in for his nightcap. "I glanced up at her and she was showing green."

Mr. Ladd went back to the office knowing just what he was going to do. But somehow, he kept putting it off. He still wasn't quite sure that, from being a symbol, Old Four-Square had become an active guide. So he went to the window and looked down at Old Four again, and sure enough she's showing green again. All in all, he did this five-six times, and each time she showed green.

That convinced him. He marked the copy for the top of page one, put on the reporter's by-line and sent it over to the copy desk. I'll

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tell you, Mr. Ladd was feeling pretty chipper that night when he came in here with a copy of the paper fresh off the press.

But he wasn't feeling so good the next afternoon when he showed up at the office. It was almost like he had a hangover. There was all hell going on. Mr. R. Farthington Clancy III had been raising Ned with the advertising manager, and the ad manager had lit into the editor and as soon as Mr. Ladd reached his desk the editor was there, too, barking about what was Mr. Ladd trying to do, sell the presses from under the paper? And what did he mean showing up members of *The Post's* own Good Government Party?

Mr. Ladd didn't say anything at first. He just ambled over to the window and stared down and there was Old Four-Square flashing a bright green.

"It sure perked me up," Mr. Ladd told Joe. He turned around and gave the editor hell right back. He said that when the owners told him to jazz up the paper, he took 'em at their word and, by golly, if they didn't like the way he jazzed it up they could get somebody else. He said that Mr. R. Farthington Clancy III was simply bluffing, that he couldn't afford *not* to advertise and let his competitors get an edge on him. And as for the Good Government Party, he said, they'd better change their name if they couldn't put up better candidates for office than those two bums they had on City Council.

Then Mr. Ladd sat back and waited for the roof to cave in. But not a godforsaken thing happened. Nobody dared file a libel suit because the story — or at least Old Four Square — was right. And the next Friday Mr. Ladd found a fat bonus in his pay envelope.

I've known Mr. Ladd man and boy for a good many years, and I've never seen anybody change his character so. Mind you, I'm not saying that Mr. Ladd of the Old School, as you might say, was a better man than the Mr. Ladd of the New School. They were both decent, honorable, open-handed gentlemen. Only where the old Mr. Ladd was a cautious old duck, the new Mr. Ladd was a hell-for-leather, ride-'em-cowboy sort who got a real kick out of printing sensational news. You might say that all his inhibitions were removed.

In the weeks and months that followed, Mr. Ladd was right in there pitching with some of the most sensational news this town ever read.

"It's not me," he'd say honestly. "I always did want to print the real news, if I thought I could get by with it. And now that Old Four-Square's behind me, I can." And once he said: "I tell you, it's

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just like that fellow what's-his-name in the Arabian Nights who had the wonderful lamp, and all he did to get what he wanted was to rub it."

Any time there was another of those borderline stories — and believe me, there were plenty of them under the new set-up — all Mr. Ladd had to do was poke his noggin out the window and see what Old Four-Square had to say about it.

Of course, once in a while she'd flash red. Like the time that pretty bank clerk got caught lifting a fistful of ten-spots from the teller's cage. *The Morning Post* got an exclusive on it while the cops were still grilling her. It was close to deadline, and there wasn't any libel or anything like that concerned, but just out of mere habit Mr. Ladd glanced at Old Four-Square and saw the warning.

"Glad I did, too," Mr. Ladd told Joe. He said he held up the story for re-checking, and what do you think? That girl had as fine a reputation as your Mrs. She'd just gone wrong that once. And why? Her old lady was like to die for lack of an operation, and it was the only way out the kid could see.

Once he found *that* out, Mr. Ladd moved in fast. He squared the girl with the bank and the cops, raised dough for the operation and found the kid a new job.

"I could have ruined the youngster by running that yarn," Mr. Ladd said.

Mr. Ladd had always been pretty much his own man, making his own decisions all his life, come good or bad. But as time went on he got to depending on Old Four-Square for just about everything — even his own thinking. Like maybe he wanted to buy a new suit, should it be a pin-stripe or a quiet check? Mr. Ladd would put it up to Old Four.

I won't say he ever deliberately used her for his own advantage. But we do have a Friday night poker game here that's almost a ritual and sometimes the stakes run pretty high. Mr. Ladd never was a red-hot poker player; just fair to middling, and sometimes he had his bad nights. So he got to asking Old Four whether it would be a good night or not, and if she flashed red he'd stay away. It got so, finally, that he stayed away most of the time.

Then there was the time the city election was coming up and what with that scandal about the two Good Government Councilmen, it was nip and tuck. Even the Gallup people refused to make any prediction. But Mr. Ladd sits down and writes out two predictions. One says that the Old Ward Crowd would win and the other says the Good Government would. And he took the first prediction to the window and held that up, and

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Old Four flashed red. So he held up the Good Government prediction, and she flashed green. And then he held up another prediction, "slim margin?" And she flashed red, again. And he held up another prediction, "landslide?" And she flashed green.

Well, sir, Mr. Ladd ran that forecast with an eight-column banner the day before election, and everybody — including *The Morning Post's* owners — thought he was crazy. But when the returns came in and showed him right, there wasn't a more popular guy in town. And the paper not only gave him another bonus, but they actually raised his salary for his "shrewd insight into our town's politics". Mr. Ladd thought that was pretty funny.

By now I guess you're wondering what a wonderful lamp like that is doing sitting on this bar. It was like this: one day Mr. Ladd is standing at the window not thinking of anything much and Old Four down there, she's bossing the traffic smart as you please — red, green, red, green — in her usual impartial way. And suddenly Mr. Ladd happened to notice quite a crowd milling around inside an office reception room in the building across the side street.

It was one of these two-room office suites, and he could see not only into the reception room, but also into the connecting private office where an old man sat at a desk. A nice-looking old codger with a thatch of white hair. And he was seeing each of these people, one by one, as his secretary let them into his office.

It looked to Mr. Ladd, from across the street, like the people all had anxious expressions when they entered the office; but that each one of them went away with a care-free smile. And Mr. Ladd wondered what sort of man it was who could make people happy just by talking to them a few minutes.

They were mostly run-of-the-mill sort of people, too. Elderly laboring men, bookkeepers, middle-aged school teachers, old ladies — that kind. So just playing a hunch, Mr. Ladd sent a reporter over to see what it was all about. He sent Max Sax.

Now, there isn't a shrewder reporter in town than little Max Sax. A real skeptic, you know, which is what a good reporter has to be. So Max went over and Mr. Ladd saw him enter the reception room, and after about an hour it came Max's turn to see the old man; and Mr. Ladd saw Max go into the private office and sit down and the old man start talking to him.

Max walked into the office poker-faced, but all of a sudden Mr. Ladd saw Max start beaming. And then Max reached into his pocket and handed the old man something, and the old man made

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a note in a book and Max went away — happy as a lark like the rest of them. And five minutes later he was back in the city room with stardust in his eyes.

He walked up to the window where Mr. Ladd was still standing and he didn't even wait for the city editor to start popping questions. He just broke out: "Say, that old coot's all right!"

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Ladd.

"Nugget's his name," Max said. "Dr. Wallingford Nugget. Investment counselor."

"Never heard of him," said Mr. Ladd.

"Naturally," said Max. "He's a retired missionary from South America. Got a framed certificate on the wall, and — you know what? He still keeps a Bible on his desk!"

"Continue," said Mr. Ladd.

"Well," said Max, still excited, "he was telling me about this uranium exchange thing, and —"

"What uranium exchange?" asked Mr. Ladd.

"Well, heck, you know," said Max, "there's the stock exchange and the produce exchange and the cotton exchange and in some countries there's still a gold exchange, and so there's this here uranium exchange. And there's all kinds of dough in it for people who know about it."

Mr. Ladd looked across the street at the ever-increasing crowd in the reception room.

"Seems like most everybody knows about it," he said, dry-like.

"They tell their friends," Max said.

"I thought the government bought up all the uranium, just like gold," Mr. Ladd said.

"That's produced in this country and Canada, that's right," Max said. "But there's lots of other countries where there's a free market — just like gold, too — in the Congo, maybe, and India and —"

"And just where is this uranium exchange?" asked the boss.

"Down in South America somewhere. I forget just where. But Dr. Nuggett showed me some cable orders — you know the kind: 'Buy so many tons uranium ore', or 'Sell so many tons'. And with the price going up and up — gee whiz!"

Mr. Ladd looked at Max hard. It isn't like Max to get so enthusiastic about a story he forgets important details, and he figured that this Doc Nugget must have quite a persuasive personality.

"You talk with those folks out there?"

"Oh, sure, they're all for him."

"Then why do they all look so worried when they come in?"

"They're afraid he won't take their money any more."

"Any more?" said Mr. Ladd, surprised.

"It works like this. Dr. Nugget

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guarantees them twenty per cent on their investment in one week. At the end of the week, they come in for their dividend. But they don't want it, see? They want to plow it back in for bigger profits. Doc — that's how they call him — he's reluctant to take it. He says himself that it's too good to last."

"Ha," said Mr. Ladd, and he's thinking of that old rascal, Ponzi, and the South Sea Bubble and that chain-letter craze.

"Sort of funny, him being a retired missionary. Does he say how he happened to learn about this good thing?"

"Oh, sure," said Max. "He doesn't hide anything. He says he heard about it down in South America just before retiring a few months ago. And being a man of the cloth, he didn't think it was right to keep people from knowing about it. Especially widows and orphans."

Mr. Ladd hardly needed to look down to see what old Four-Square had to say about all this; and sure enough, when he did look, she was flashing a bright red, meaning that the deal was no good.

"What was it I saw you give him?" he asked Max.

"Me? Well, today's payday you know, and he let me put in my whole hundred bucks. Gee, Mr. Ladd, I'd have invested more if I'd had it. Say! Would you sign an advance voucher for me for a couple hundred, maybe?"

Mr. Ladd looked at Max like he'd never seen him before. He couldn't believe that any reporter of his could be so crazy.

"I think," he said coldly, "that you'd better take this next week off, Max. Without pay," he says.

Max hardly heard. He still had that stardust in his eyes.

"And do you know what he said when he accepted my money?" Max says. "He said, joking of course, 'You realize, Mr. Sax, I *might* abscond with this!' That proves how honest he is!".

Well, there was only one thing for Mr. Ladd to do, of course — both as a square-shooter himself and as a crusading city editor. And that was to expose this slick gent. It was an old swindle. The Doc merely paid dividends out of new capital investment, hoping that the investments would keep coming in so that he could keep the ball rolling. When the market for suckers dried up, the whole thing would collapse.

Mr. Ladd put a couple of reporters on the story and made sure this time that they didn't go near the persuasive old geezer. And he telephoned around South America and found there wasn't any such thing as a uranium exchange. And he found that the old man hadn't ever sent any cables — buy, sell, or any other kind.

He found out, too, that there

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was no religious denomination in the country that ever had a Dr. Wallingford Nugget on its foreign mission roster. And he learned that the Doc didn't have any bank account. And that was right where he came up against a stone wall. There wasn't one damn thing in writing to prove what was going on — no cancelled checks, no deposits, no letters, no nothing. Not even receipts. Doc took cash — and cash only. And he had such a nice charming way about him that nobody ever asked for a receipt.

What made it worse was that even the suckers wouldn't talk. They had faith in him — even when the reporters told them there wasn't any such uranium exchange. And besides, Doc had primed 'em. He'd told them that, while it was okay to pass the word along to their friends, it wouldn't do for the newspapers to get hold of it. The general public, he said, would start investing, too. And that way he'd be swamped with so many orders that it might inflate the market beyond the point of diminishing returns.

Mr. Ladd called in the District Attorney's office and the F.B.I. and the S.E.C. and the Treasury agents. But the Government said it was out of their jurisdiction since Doc was operating strictly within the state. And the D.A.'s men couldn't dig up even as much evidence as Mr. Ladd.

Every step of the way, of course, Mr. Ladd consulted Old Four-Square, and every time he got the green signal to go ahead. And finally he sat down and wrote the story himself.

It was a pretty dangerous story, of course, but Mr. Ladd was in a hurry to get it in the paper. He just couldn't stand looking across the street every day and seeing all those poor people giving up their life's savings to that old man. And besides, he was banking on Old Four-Square to back him up.

Naturally, before he sent the story to the copy desk, he gave a quick glance down to Old Four. And by Harry! This time the light was out! Yes, sir, I swear — there was neither red nor green, pink nor blue nor purple nor anything else. She was just plain out.

Mr. Ladd came in here that night and I'm telling you, he was a mighty sick man. He hadn't dared depend on his own judgment, so of course he hadn't been able to run the story.

Things didn't get any better, either. That light was out three-four days, and Mr. Ladd was just itching to run the story. And every day there were more people in Doc Nugget's office, giving him their hard-earned money. And then one evening Mr. Ladd looked down and there was Old Four-Square bossing the traffic again, proud as ever. And Mr. Ladd

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rushed the story over to the window and — as I live — she flashed red!

Mr. Ladd was fit to bust. It didn't make any sense. Every step of the way, mind you, she'd given him the green light. But when the story was all put together and he was ready to run it, she wouldn't let him.

He was still thinking about what a mess he was in when he went out to supper that night and he passed Old Four's standard. It occurred to him that maybe the Traffic Bureau men had taken her away and installed a new light. So he looked up at her. It was Old Four, all right; he'd know her anywhere, but she seemed sick. He timed her. And for the first time since he'd known her, she'd been off her button. She was giving maybe ninety seconds this time to north-south traffic and the next time maybe two minutes and the next time maybe eighty seconds. And the same east-west. Not impartial any more, you see. Just plain nuts.

Back in the office, Mr. Ladd stared down at her. And she said green this time and he got excited. But when he looked again, sort of mentally asking her what to do, she said red. Then green, then red, then green.

"Hell," said Mr. Ladd. "If you can't make up your mind about this blank-blank story, how in hell can I?"

And thinking about these poor widows and orphans, Mr. Ladd sent the story over to the copy desk anyway.

Some people might call Mr. Ladd a bit touched about this thing. But *I* don't think so. I know him too well.

He was still standing at the window, looking moodily down into the street, wondering if he'd done right and getting no coherent answer from Old Four when the presses started rolling and he could feel the building tremble like it always does, and he thought, "Well, it's in the lap of the gods now." And just then old Doc Nugget walked out of the building across the side street. He had a fat briefcase in one hand and he hailed a taxi and got in.

It was the east-west street, you know, and there was quite a bit of traffic and the cab had to wait a minute because Old Four had the red light against it. And then Mr. Ladd gasped at what he saw. The east-west light changed to green, but — the north-south light *stayed* green. And all in a moment there was one hellish mix-up.

The cab lunged ahead on the green and got smacked right on the side by a north-bound truck which veered off toward Old Four-Square. Two other cars tangled and a south-bound bus stopped sideways in the middle of the

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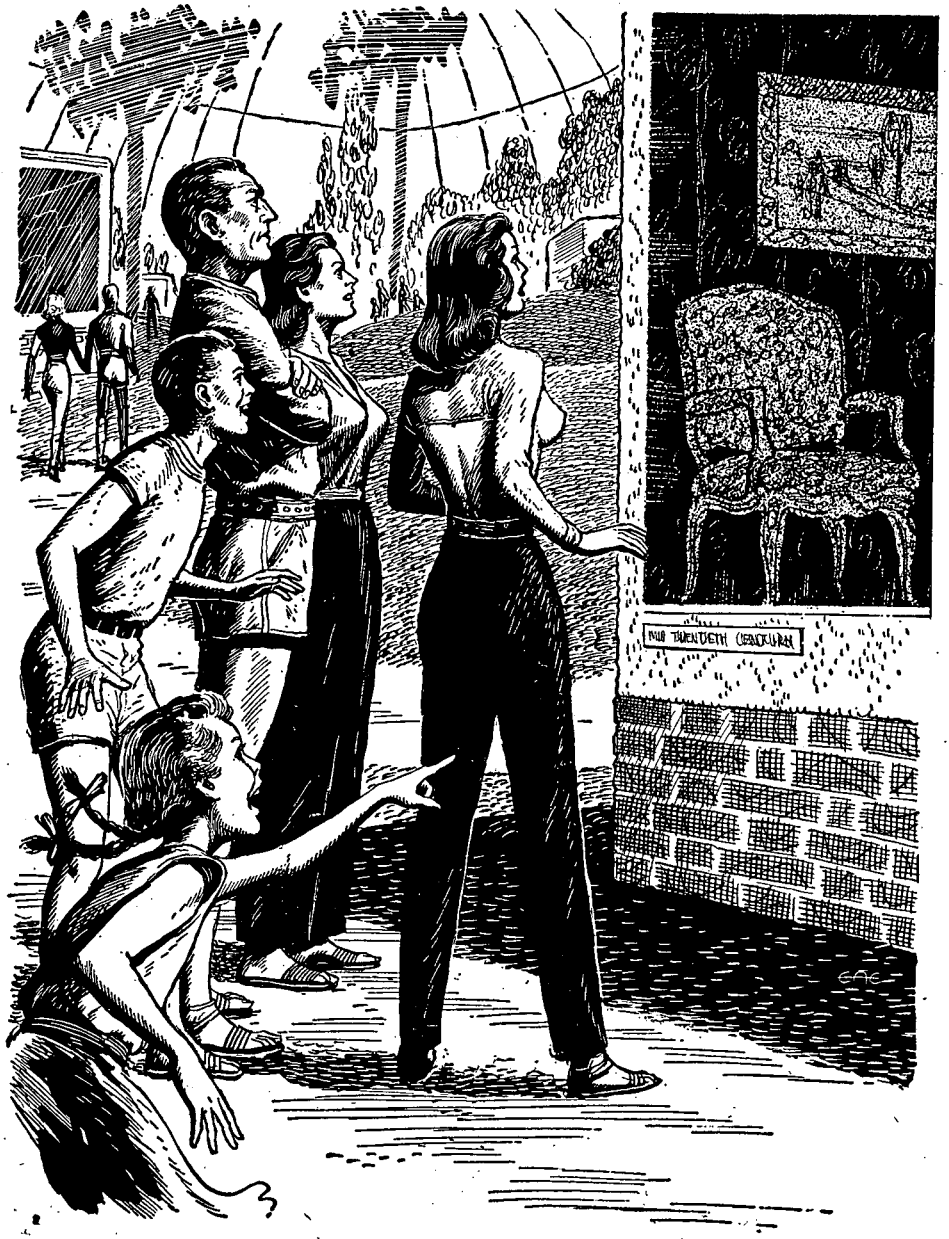

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By J. T. M'INTOSH

ESCAPE ME NEVER

An idea: a few centuries from now, scientists dig up ancient bones from some graveyard and recreate the man who once owned them. Then let's say they stick this freak in the local zoo for the kids to laugh at on Sunday. What's going to bother most this man from yesterday?

Being laughed at? Not so; you get used to that. Loss of freedom? Well, perhaps. A feeling of inferiority? Only in a vague way. No; the way we see it, one factor will make our exhibit a real problem. A three-letter factor, spelled S-E-X. . . .

THE Scientist looked young, but the Savage knew he must be eighty or ninety.

"Say what you have to say," said the Savage resentfully. "I'll dress as you talk. It would be ridiculous for me to expect to have any privacy."

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"I'm sorry," replied the Scientist mildly. "I came early because I wanted to see you before —"

"Before it's time for the wild animal to go on exhibit again. I know. Get to it. What is it now?"

"We didn't want to keep you in suspense," said the Scientist apologetically, "expecting something that wasn't going to happen. We have decided not to recreate a woman for you."

The Savage turned white, then red. "Just as well," he retorted bitterly. "This sort of life would be hell for her. Good you realize it. Anything else?" He jerked the lapels of his gray lounge suit and frowned at himself in the mirror.

"No. We just wanted you to know."

"All right, I know. I remain unique. Come one and all — come and see the missing link, no longer missing. Homo sapiens, who preceded homo superior — poor fellow. Are you going now?"

The Scientist went, with a last half-sympathetic, half-vexed glance at the Savage.

So that was the end of that dream. The Savage wasn't entirely sorry. He didn't really want them to recreate a girl, as they had him, from a few dead fragments dug up from rock or soil. They wouldn't have been able to give her back her memory of life thousands of years ago, any more than they could give him his, so she wouldn't remember and regret the past. But she would find herself in a present where she was only a living exhibit in a museum. Where there could only be one companion for her, a prisoner and an exhibit like herself, though she would see thousands of people not physically different from herself.

Yet, from the selfish point of view, it would have been pleasant to meet and live with a woman, an equal, whose present problems and past history and potentialities were similar to his own. Her presence would have supplied so many goals in life which were lacking now.

There had been a time when the scientists of the Third Century had seemed aware of their obligations to living beings plucked from the past to increase their knowledge. The Savage had dim traces of recollection of his former life — as if his very bones had remembered a little — but the scientists had had to base their guesses about the long-gone time when he had lived and died on what he was, not what he could tell them. His real, clear memories were all of the Third Century. And clearest of all was how they had treated him at first with sympathy and understanding, as if they knew they had done him a great wrong by bringing him to a world in which he had no place and meant to make all the repayment that was in their power.

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Then that stopped and he went on view to all who cared to come and look. The people who came to see how early homo sapiens looked and had lived were still human and sympathetic, but the scientists, on the comparatively rare occasions on which he saw any of them now, were blunt, laconic and noncommittal.

He sat in an armchair and read a book. It was a detective novel, and he found it irritating that this book, one of the very few to survive from his time, should be quite as incomprehensible to him as to the people of the Third Century. Well, perhaps not quite. He could understand the underlying tones of conflict better, how men could come to kill each other, treat women brutally, cheat, steal and lie for power. He could understand fear, for his body, so incredibly, minutely recreated, had once known fear. He could understand, too, the feelings of the hunters, the men who tracked down criminals with all the resources of science and mind and body. Hunters had to have a blood lust, a sort of controlled hate, cold and patient and calculating, which he could appreciate and the people of this world could not. The question had occupied his thoughts a great deal recently, because —

"Can't you speak, Savage?" asked a friendly voice.

He had ignored the shuffling of feet and the movements he caught in the corner of his eye. There were no bars in his cage, but it was a cage nevertheless. Though it seemed he could get up and touch the people who looked frankly, curiously, into his room, he knew that between them and him there was a paper-thin region of particularly resilient nothing through which only air could pass.

He looked up and saw a family. There were others watching him, but the family stood as a unit — mother, father, seventeen-year-old brunette daughter, fourteen-year-old son, eleven-year-old blonde daughter. It was the brunette who had spoken.

Anything to pass the time.

"Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't," he told them. The bitterness, absent for a while, crept back into his voice. "Occasionally I give lectures on myself. That's my privilege. People are prepared to listen to me talk."

"Why, you talk just like us!" said the girl, disappointed.

"Don't be misled by that," he answered with ironic courtesy. She was very pretty, the elder daughter, and it was inevitable that he should want to make a good impression on her. "What's your name?"

"Mirune."

The heroine of the book he was reading was called Maureen. It had been translated, of course, a long time ago, perhaps even sev-

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eral times; but maybe the proper names had been left untouched.

"I'll call you Maureen, if you don't mind. My education was just the same as yours, Maureen," he said smiling, "only I had to take it quicker. So it's not surprising I talk just as you do. I don't know the language I used to speak — it wouldn't mean any more to me now than to you."

The news was spreading that the Savage was talking. He didn't often do that. People crowded on the other side of the force-field. The Savage nearly went back to his book and ignored them all. But the girl was still there, still excited at the idea that she was talking to a man who had been part of ancient history, still as pretty as she had been thirty seconds ago. So he went on talking to Maureen, ignoring the thickening crowd outside the cage. They seemed to understand he was holding a private conversation, and kept quiet.

The Savage had picked up some of the standards of his own time from the few books, chiefly novels, which had survived, and he found it mildly interesting that Maureen was dressed in one of the few styles of the Third Century which his own people would have considered indecent. By the old standards of convention, the women of The Third Century were never more than half dressed, but seldom less. Maureen wore severe navy-blue slacks and pale-blue silk wings. Wings, a new garment with an old name, covered arms, shoulders, shoulder-blades and throat — no more.

Other women in the crowd — none of them was fat, thin, rough-skinned, short-sighted, toothless, or obviously old — wore forbidding tunics above trunks or shorts, if they wished it to be known that they had beautiful legs, or brief bodices over slacks or long skirts, if they were proud of arms and shoulders. Only Maureen of the women in the crowd outside his room had happened, that day, to decide to leave her breasts and diaphragm bare and be modest about everything else.

But the Savage, as starved of sex as he was, even forgot that abruptly as he realized that a plan had come into his mind. It took an effort to continue to talk easily to Maureen, pretending that nothing had happened to change his whole outlook on this world and his place in it. He made it, however. There was nothing to show, he hoped, that one moment he was a caged, resentful animal and the next a man with a purpose once more.

"You're cleverer than I am!" Maureen exclaimed suddenly. "You're not a primitive man at all!"

He smiled. "Argue about that with your scientists. They know me better than I do."

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"But it's a shame to put you on show like this when you're so intelligent."

The Savage cast a quick glance at the crowd. They were sympathetic, as always, but much more so than usual. He didn't always try to make such a good impression.

"It's not as bad as it looks," he said. "I have a lot more freedom than you might think. I can even write to you, if you like."

"Oh, please do!" She rattled off an address eagerly, while mama and papa looked at each other and smiled indulgently. "Aren't you going to write it down?" she asked.

He laughed. "I was given a new, clean mind," he said. "Things stick better. I won't forget. Look, Maureen, you're getting crushed there." The crowd moved back at once, but he went on: "Come back if you like when there isn't such a crowd."

"And if I write — how shall I address it?"

He laughed again. "The Savage, Anthropological Museum, Chago," he said. "That'll find me."

She went with her family then, and the crowd thinned to the usual trickle. But the Savage's brain was racing.

If anyone was to help him, it must be someone he met in this way. He saw scientists, individually; but he wrote them off. No, if anyone would help him, it would be someone young, eager, innocent, emotional. Someone like Maureen.

Help him to what? Freedom, of course. Like all healthy, caged creatures, the Savage had planned escape from the moment he realized he was caged. He couldn't escape to his own time, and he wasn't sure he would want to if he could. What he wanted was a place in this world. He thought he could make it for himself, with a little help. He didn't want to die, but he was ready to risk death. He had seen the way the Third Century scientists killed animals: humanely, cleanly, but utterly without feeling or regret. The people who came to look at him might be sympathetic, but he knew that to the scientists he was just another animal, more intelligent than the others.

If it had not been for the scheme of bringing a woman of his own kind to live with him, he would have made his bid for freedom long since.

It would be better, of course, to wait until he had talked with hundreds of people as he had talked with Maureen. Maureen might still be the one, but it would not be obvious. As it was, the scientists and psychologists who were responsible for him would find out about the incident of that morning and go to Maureen at once. But

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there were other reasons for not waiting. One was that he was sure the strongest impression on Maureen would be *now*.

Another was a good reason only to himself — he couldn't wait any longer. He would almost prefer to fail now than succeed in six months' time.

Through the day he read books, ate meals, drank coffee and ignored the spectators. Some of them spoke to him, perhaps having heard how the sulky Savage had unexpectedly opened up that morning. He paid no attention.

The room in which he sat was a twentieth-century lounge. People could come and see the Savage in his natural habitat, a room with patterned wallpaper, leather armchairs, an oak desk, a glass-fronted bookcase and thick carpets.

At last the trickle of people thinned and stopped altogether. The museum closed. But the Savage didn't move. He had no other home. He lived here, like the apes on the same floor and the fish in the aquarium downstairs.

The attendant brought him his evening meal, friendly as ever. The Savage watched disinterestedly as he stepped through the force-field as if it weren't there; shorted round him, probably. He came alone, but the Savage knew there would be no advantage to jumping the man.

"Like some company?" asked the attendant. "I'll bring in a couple of friends for a poker game if you like."

"No, thanks," said the Savage coldly. "I just want to be left in peace."

"So it's like that tonight," the attendant said agreeably. "Okay. Ring if you need anything. Or if you change your mind." He stepped through the force-field again.

The Savage ate his meal without noticing what it was. When he wanted to be left in peace, he was. The attendant wouldn't even come back for the dishes, but would collect them the next morning when he brought the Savage his coffee.

Could it be so easy to escape and hide among the people of the Third Century? Could it be possible? The Savage told himself that it was. He glanced across at the detective novel he had just finished and had half understood.

His contemporaries were more experienced in crime than the people of the Third Century. A good twentieth-century detective could trace anyone, any time, anywhere. But there were no fingerprint files now, no police in the sense of the police in the novel — only the psychiatric bureau.

He might be wrong, but he was certain he had a chance. How much of a chance depended on Maureen.

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As soon as he had finished his meal he opened the desk and took out a silver paper-knife. It was useless as a weapon, but it was quite a good screwdriver.

In the bedroom there was a ventilator covered by a grill. Rapidly the Savage removed the frame. The opening was just large enough for him. A little tunnel led three yards, then bent out of sight.

Obviously no one thought it was possible to crawl through the ventilating system. It certainly wasn't easy, but it *was* possible. The Savage had already been in one of the attendant's rooms, and no one had been any the wiser. He had returned on that occasion because he had no plan, because he had no hope of escape then, because of the girl who was going to join him — and because he wanted to keep to himself the fact that he could

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squirm through the ventilating system any time he wanted to.

He stripped naked and pushed his head and arms and shoulders into the smooth metal tunnel. It would be a waste of time trying to conceal how he had escaped; he could not replace the grill anyway. He couldn't turn in the pipe, and he had to be face first to remove the grill at the other end.

It took him two hours to work his way along to the attendant's room, only a few yards away. There were two bends, and each of them held him up for nearly an hour. He had to strain and inch himself round, millimetre by millimetre, pushing at the smooth walls of his lightless prison with hands and chin and knees. Perhaps when his prison was constructed from some suite already in existence, they had sent someone along the ventilator to see if it was possible to escape that way, and decided that it wasn't.

After two hours of straining and cursing silently the Savage reached the room where he had once before stood panting, wondering whether to try to escape or not. As before, it was dark and empty. The room was used by one of the night attendants who looked after him and the other animals in the building, and he would be on duty elsewhere.

It took fifteen minutes' patient work to remove the ventilator grill which he had himself replaced the last time he was here. Once it was off and the Savage had climbed into the room, he really began to feel free. He might be caught at any moment, of course; but he didn't think it was likely.

He looked for a depilatory. Shaved clean, as he was, he was still obviously the Savage. Everyone else used an ointment, but this he had never been given. He found some in the bathroom, and in five minutes his face was as smooth as a baby's. He took the hair off his chest and from under his arms, too. He left the soft down on his legs. That was still common among men.

Still naked, he searched for something that would stain his skin slightly. There were still people with white skins, but only about one in twenty. He wanted to be as undistinguishable as possible. That meant he had to find a faint brown stain — lighter than a sun tan, but distinctly darker than his shoulders and chest and stomach. He found a brown ink which, many times diluted, served his purpose. He stained every inch of his body.

Clothes and money were no problem. In five minutes, wearing shorts and a soft shirt, his hair swept straight back and a little money in his pockets, he looked no longer the Savage, but exactly like a hundred men who had passed in front of his cage that day.

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Getting out of the museum was no problem. He simply walked out. He had to leave unlocked a door which had been locked on the inside, but otherwise he left no clues he recognized.

In the brightly lit streets of Chago at night he walked rather defiantly at first, but gradually his false confidence became real confidence. If he walked, he was completely ignored. People walking were going somewhere, not just passing the time. When he stopped, friendly people would pass remarks on the usual things — not the weather now, for that was controlled, but everything else. He found it easy to start, carry on or terminate these casual exchanges. Nobody saw anything strange about him. His accent was perfect, and apparently he knew all he had to know.

A wave of resentment flooded him at the thought. If the people had been different — much more intelligent than he was, physically changed, thinking a different way — he could have understood the scientists' keeping him a prisoner, a man apart. But he was a man as these were men. He remembered a line from a poem which still had something, despite an obviously lame translation: *A man's a man in spite of all these other considerations.*

Angry, he wasn't too careful about where he was going. He brushed hard against someone, grunted and passed on. Then, abruptly, he swung round. The man had spoken and was still speaking; apologizing for the fault, which was clearly the Savage's. The Savage turned and the man stopped, his eyes wide and frightened. The Savage made a tremendous effort.

"I'm really terribly sorry, sir," he said apologetically. "My thoughts were far away."

The man smiled uncertainly and murmured, "Think nothing of it. My fault entirely." But he wasn't happy; he had seen flaming anger in the Savage's face.

The Savage knew the dangers of over-elaboration, but he wanted to satisfy this man. "I'm an actor," he explained. "I was thinking about a part."

The man's face cleared. "Of course," he said. The dark passions still ruled the stage. He smiled at the Savage and went on. People had lost their adulation of actors and actresses. They would go and see and applaud them, but never imagined they were gods and goddesses.

The Savage walked on. He would have to watch that.

He didn't have to ask anyone the way. Chago, like most cities, was laid out in such a way that the name of a street told its location. He reached the house where Maureen lived and looked it over.

There were still rich and not-so-rich — there always would be,

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now that people had at last realized the fact that all men were not born equal. Maureen's father, presumably, was successful. The house was fairly large, a private house. The Savage got into the gardens by vaulting a low wall. Finding Maureen couldn't have been easier. As he was standing against a tree surveying the house, light suddenly blazed from an upstairs window and Maureen came to the window and shut it. He saw her only for a moment, but that was enough.

If he had seen the whole family at the museum that morning, there seemed no reason for him not to break in at the nearest window and go openly to Maureen's room. Burglars were almost unknown. So were servants. The younger son and daughter were presumably asleep by this time, Maureen was in her room, and her mother and father would be sitting quietly in the front room where a glimmer of light showed. Crime was a very simple thing in a world which had next to no criminals.

It was as easy as he had expected. Three ground-floor windows were open. He hesitated outside what he had decided was Maureen's room. Then, boldly, he pushed the door open, went inside and closed it after him.

Maureen was in bed reading. She looked up at the sound, and the Savage was so surprised at her expression that he waited for her to speak first. She was disappointed, that was all.

"So it was all a sham," she said, disillusioned, explaining his appearance to herself. "Mom and pop knew about it, I suppose, and were laughing at me. And I was so sorry for you —"

"Were you really?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, I've been thinking about you all day. But you don't come from the past at all, do you? It's just a sideshow like those at the carnival. . . ."

The Savage crossed the room and sat on her bed. She didn't shrink from him at all, or reinforce her filmy nightdress with the coverlet. But he would have been surprised if she had done either.

"Listen, Maureen," he said, quietly but intensely. "There's no sham. I come from the past. I was a prisoner. And your mother and father certainly don't know I'm here. Nobody does, yet."

Her reaction was again unexpected. The frown died from her face, leaving it cool and interested. "Explain, please," she said.

He explained. He concluded: "So you see, what happens now depends entirely on you. If you won't help me, I haven't much chance. I'm bound to give myself away when I go to a hotel, or try to get a job, or travel. I know your world well enough for casual con-

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tacts with people, but not well enough to fit into it. So I'm asking you — I don't even know what I'm asking you. I'm just saying *please help me.*"

He meant what he said. Maureen didn't argue, or say it was impossible, or that it wasn't her affair. She said, "Go into the bathroom for a minute, please. I want to dress."

The Savage nearly warned her not to give him away or he'd — But what was the use? She could lock him up now or give him up in a week's time, as she liked. He went into the bathroom.

Staring blindly at the chrome fittings, he wondered. Maureen was different. That morning he had taken her for an empty-headed seventeen-year-old girl, pretty, sentimental, naive. He knew already he had been wrong. Seventeen? No, she must be nineteen or twenty. Not sentimental, but warmly sympathetic, from the way she was disappointed at the idea that his plight was all sham, and the way she said she had been thinking about him all day. Not naive either. Now that something had happened which mattered, she could be calm and reasonable. Even if she was ringing up the museum at that moment, there was much more to Maureen than he had thought.

"Come in," she called quietly, and he went back. She wore an ankle-length grey dress which glinted as she moved. "I never wear this," she said, "so mom and pop will throw anyone who asks off the track. I'm going to dye my hair, too."

"What's happening?" the Savage asked quietly.

She spun to face him. "When will they start to look for you?" she asked. "Exactly, I mean. To the nearest minute."

"Eight-thirty tomorrow," he said. "Maybe before then, but it's unlikely."

"I'm taking you to Australia," she said. "I've never been there. My folks will think I went to the Continent or Canada."

The Savage did something he didn't mean to do. He caught her shoulders so that she had to tilt her head to look up into his eyes.

"Maureen," he said quietly, "are you sure you want to do this? I came to ask for help — advice, money, a little exertion on your part, perhaps. I never meant to ask for you."

"You're not getting me."

"Don't make a joke of it. Your coming with me — linking yourself with me — taking responsibility for me. Are you sure you mean to do that? If you had a day to think about it, would you do it?"

"Yes," she said.

It was from that moment, as her gray eyes stared so frankly and fearlessly and yet so understand-

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ingly into his, that the Savage loved Mirune Kirk.

He had time to wonder, while she went for some money, at his unselfish reluctance to accept Maureen's offer to come with him. He wouldn't have expected it of himself. In fact, he told himself wryly, it was rather ridiculous. A hunted animal couldn't afford delicacies of feeling. It had to take what it could get, not nobly refuse assistance greater than expected.

He *had* been wrong about Maureen. She wasn't a saint or a genius or a great personality. But she was level-headed and could take a decision. He had been very lucky.

She slipped quietly into the room again. "I've got a thousand franks," she said. "That will last for three months, if necessary. But we'll hope things are settled long before that."

"How do you mean — settled?"

"Oh, the obvious things," she said, a little impatiently. "You may be voted citizenship in absentia, once representations are made. An offer may be made to you, if you come forward. There may be a country where you'd automatically have full legal rights, I don't know. It may turn out that no one had any right to keep you in a museum. Or perhaps . . ."

She flushed suddenly, and the Savage guessed that she had been thinking of one thing that he had known about. If he married, no one would take him back. At least, it was very unlikely. The people of the Third Century placed a very high value on marriage. Much higher than his own people, to judge from what he had read. But Maureen didn't want to talk about that. She hurried him into action instead.

They got out of the house the way he had entered. They took nothing with them except a small valise. But first Maureen left a note to her parents. She let the Savage see it. It read:

> Dear Mom and Pop,
>
> Now, first of all, there's nothing to worry about. Got that clear? Okay. Remember the Savage we saw in the Museum yesterday? Well, a few hours after you read this I expect people will be ringing up asking if I know anything about him. The conversation yesterday was rather public, you know. Well, I do, and you can tell them that. I've gone away with him, in fact, and you can tell them that too.
>
> But this isn't romance, it's justice. They didn't ask him if he wanted to be recreated. And when he was, he found himself an animal in a cage. That strike you as fair and reasonable? Me neither. The less you know about me for a while the better, but this much I'll tell you — while you *don't* hear from me, I'm all right. If anything of any kind goes wrong, I'll be back so fast! Love,
>
> Mirune

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"I can't tell them," she said, "that I've got money, for I expect others will read this letter. Knowing Mom and Pop, I think they'll show the letter and give no further help whatever. It's my affair, and they won't say anything I wouldn't want them to say."

"From what I've heard of family life a few thousand years ago," murmured the Savage, "it was never like this."

Maureen laughed. It was the first time he had heard her laugh. It was a wonderful sound — but perhaps that was because he was already dimly aware he loved her. "Maybe it's not so different after all," she said. "I don't say they'll entirely approve of the whole thing and assume I must be right. But they'll know I *may* be right, and they'll at least suspend judgment."

On the way to the airfield Maureen went into a women's washroom and dyed her hair blonde. She hadn't done it at home because she might leave traces. When she came out the Savage looked at her with half-amused dismay. "You're still a knockout," he said, "but you're not Maureen."

She smiled, but she seemed to like that.

It wasn't necessary to have reservations, but Maureen insisted that they'd booked a week ago for Safrisco. At least, if she didn't exactly insist, she looked surprised when the girl at the office said there was no record of a booking, so that the girl said it was a mistake, wrote in the reservation a week back, and gave them their choice of seats; probably merely on the principle that the customer was always right, particularly when it didn't matter.

"Why did you do that?" the Savage asked as they walked out to the plane. "Won't they find out later that one couple insisted they had made reservations a week ago for Safrisco, and hadn't?"

"No. Your scientists, or attendants, or psychologists, or whoever it is, won't come down here and ask about details like that. They'll ring up all the travel depots and ask about couples who travelled tonight, excluding anyone who had reservations. And anyway, that girl won't be around tomorrow morning to explain that what's down as a reservation isn't really. Not when she's on duty tonight."

Silently, the Savage revised a few earlier ideas about crime in the Third Century. Maureen could be a very successful criminal.

They slept on the flight to Safrisco. But it was short, and when they arrived they booked rooms at the airport hotel and disappeared into them, heavy-eyed.

It was late the next morning when the Savage awoke. Maureen was sitting by his bedside, reading, and it took him a few seconds

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to explain things to himself.

"You let me sleep," he exclaimed. "We should have gone on."

"Why?" she asked.

It was one of those simple questions which might or might not be stupid, and in any case it was difficult to answer. The Savage let it go.

"I want to get up," he said.

"Well, what's stopping you?"

"The fact that you're here and I have no pajamas."

"You needn't let that bother you. It doesn't me."

"Just for curiosity — how old are you, Maureen?"

"Twenty-three."

He was a little annoyed at that. She was going around under false pretences, looking seventeen. When he first saw her he had felt quite fatherly towards her — well, almost.

"Why the frown?" she asked.

Anger was foreign to the Third Century. He chased it away with an effort. "Anything about me there?" he asked, pointing to the paper she was reading.

"Not yet. Hasn't been time."

While she was hidden behind a double page, he got up and dressed. "What do we do now?" he asked.

She looked over the paper. "It's done," she told him. "Breakfast for you in ten minutes. Clothes — I bought some for you. You don't seem to have noticed it, but those are different. Reservations — we go on to Sydney in three hours. But not straight from here. We take up a new identity and leave from the other airport. When we leave here we become Mr. and Mrs. John Camber. But only till we reach Sydney. Then —"

He grunted. It was an ungracious sound. She stopped, shrugged, and went back to the newspaper.

Rage had welled up again violently in the Savage. She took so much for granted. She just arranged things. He didn't consider that that was what he had wanted her to do. He was furious. She wasn't even paying the slightest attention to him. He wanted to pull her about by that smooth, false-gold hair. He wanted to shake her till her teeth rattled. He wondered if she would still be cool, reasonable and competent when she was writhing on the floor after he had hit her in the stomach. . . .

His fury burst in a cloud of sparks and he said in a flat voice, "I wonder if that's it."

Maureen threw aside the paper, startled by his tone. "Wonder if what's what?" she asked.

He sat on the bed and gripped her hands. "Maureen, do you ever get angry?" he demanded.

"Yes, why?"

"What's it like?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. How do you describe an emotion?

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I was angry when I thought of what they were doing to you, keeping you a prisoner when you —"

"Maybe I know why they kept me a prisoner. I never realized it before — never quite in this way. The way I get angry has no place in this world. I'm sane and reasonable, as you say. Then suddenly something happens and I want to destroy. To hurt . . ."

He had a vivid mental picture, his earlier thought translated into sight and sound. Maureen standing up, frightened. Himself driving his fist exultantly into her body. Maureen crumpling up, writhing in agony.

He was terrified. His terror was fact, not part of his mental picture.

He wept.

"We'd better go back," said the Savage. He couldn't look at Maureen, but he knew her tunic was visibly wet where he had cried on it. He hadn't told her what had made him weep.

"This picture," she said quietly. "This thing you think you nearly did. Was it — murder?"

"No," he said dully.

"Just taking me, then? That's not such a horrible and unnatural thought." She laughed. It wasn't quite a natural laugh, but it was a very good try.

"Not that either. Maureen, have you ever heard of —"

He stopped. He had been going to tell her, but suddenly he saw it wasn't necessary. It would never happen with Maureen again. Perhaps the weeping had done something. Broken down a wall, or built one up. Anyway, he knew he would never hurt Maureen. He would never be angry with Maureen.

He laughed. It was such a healthy laugh that Maureen joined in. "Funny how things change," he said. "You just saw me lose something nasty. I think it's really gone."

"So do I," said Maureen quietly. "And we're going on to Sydney."

When they reached Sydney the evening papers had some mention of the Savage's escape — mention, no more. They frowned at the brief paragraphs.

"This doesn't really say anything," said Maureen. "That you're no longer under restraint at Chago — that might mean they'd let you go. It doesn't say you escaped. That would imply that you were a prisoner and that someone had a right to keep you prisoner. And no mention of whether anyone's looking for you."

"In a book I was reading," said the Savage thoughtfully, "I read something that indicated newspapers weren't always free. That some things had to be kept out. Could this be — what was it called? — muzzling the press?"

"I don't know whether it's muzzled or not. I expect why there's

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so little here is because they're trying to work out now whether you're a private or public responsibility. What they can say about you and whether they've any right to take you back."

They went to a theater that night, and the Savage enjoyed the show more than anything he could remember. He had ceased reminding himself what a short time he had known Maureen. The time he had known her seemed to be the only part of his life that mattered.

When they said good-night outside Maureen's hotel bedroom door, she murmured thoughtfully, "I suppose it would be odd after an evening like this if you didn't kiss me goodnight. What do you think?"

He didn't think. He took her in his arms very gently and touched her lips lightly. He must have demonstrated the essential difference between depth and violence of passion, for she broke free quickly, met his gaze for a second, slipped into her room and closed the door.

The Savage stood still, wondering. She had been startled, but more than startled. There had been fear too. Not fear of him. Could it be fear of losing him?

Whatever it was, she hadn't meant him to see it.

Wakening early the next morning, he hurried down to the foyer for newspapers. A woman reading a paper stumbled into him, and he had to grab her arm to prevent her falling.

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, though the fault was hers. She disengaged her arm, nodded with cold civility, and walked off along the passage.

It was only when he was on his way upstairs again with the papers that the Savage realized that he had been less angry than the woman. He remembered the time when he had had to pretend to be an actor. And now the woman looking at him quite hostilely, while he remained polite and solicitous.

Curiously, some of his irritation came back then. What was going on anyway? Was he unconsciously trying to change himself, to make himself conform to the Third Century? To make himself fit for Maureen?

The last thought softened him at once. Yes, if it was for Maureen he was all for it.

She tapped on his door while he was reading the papers. When he saw her he smiled and was happy. He couldn't help himself. She was wearing her blue slacks and wings again, as when he had first seen her. But this time he only noticed that, no more. When there was only one woman, identifying details didn't count.

He almost said, "Don't I get to kiss you good morning?" but bit it back. He couldn't expect her to be as careless of the short time

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he had known her as he was.

He said instead, "Well, they've come out with an offer."

She raised her eyebrows. "And from the way you say that, you don't think much of it."

"I didn't know I was making it so obvious. The psychiatric bureau is now behind the people who recreated me. Apparently there's nothing much against me, though there's a hint that I'll be pretty closely watched. But they come right out with it and say to me, wherever I happen to be, that I can come back and live my own life as I like, free to work at what I like, do what I like, go where I like."

"But . . . ?" prompted Maureen.

"As you say. But they're suspicious of my genetic strain. They don't want it in the Third Century. I mustn't marry."

"And how do you feel about this? Will you accept?"

"No."

"Does that mean you want to marry?"

The Savage was silent. Maureen was quite capable of discussing things like this quite impersonally. But he couldn't.

"Or just that you want to feel you can if you should ever want to?" she suggested. "If it's only that — there's nothing against accepting the offer. Nobody would try to bind you for life. Mention of genetic strain sounds like an excuse. They want to watch you. They're not quite sure. Later, they may feel differently. And if *you* feel differently, you can always say so, and see what happens. So if you've no immediate thoughts of marriage, why not accept?"

The Savage remained silent. The old resentment flared in him; not resentment against Maureen, nor against anyone else, but against things, circumstances, laws, conventions.

"But then perhaps you *have* immediate thoughts of marriage," Maureen went on coolly. "So, of course, you don't want to accept the offer. You couldn't, because even while you promised, you'd be thinking of breaking the promise. Is there a girl?"

Without thinking, he nodded.

"Who is she?"

He surveyed her from a pit of perplexity and indecision with misery at its core. Her tone was only mildly interested. He hadn't told her much about himself. As far as she knew, there could be a girl, another girl — one of the scientists or attendants or psychologists he had seen so often and might, but didn't, know so well.

His perplexity and indecision and misery must have been obvious. "Savage," said Maureen with a catch in her voice, "do I have to go down on my knees and beg you to tell me I'm the girl?"

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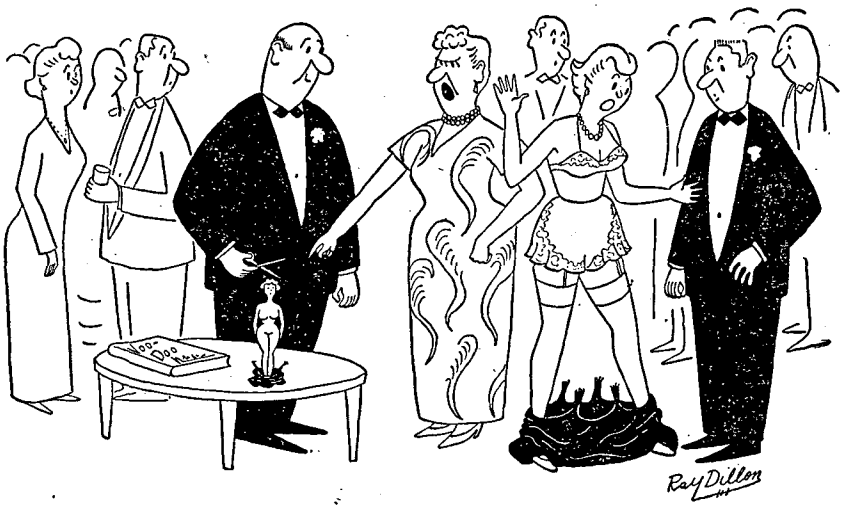
It was a moment he would remember always; Maureen at that moment was the picture out of all his life he wanted to keep forever. Nothing, to him, could ever be more beautiful. She was as she had been when he first saw her, except that now her hair was blonde, her cheeks flushed, her breasts heaving, her eyes bright. But then she had just been a girl among women. Now, in any way that any woman differed from Maureen, to that extent that woman was imperfect.

There was a tap on the door. The Savage was filled with foreboding even before he saw the psychiatric bureau badge.

The man was alone and he was friendly and apologetic. "Sorry to bother you," he said. "A picture went out on TV this morning of a couple of people my department would like to find." His manner was open, but he took their cooperation for granted. People didn't obstruct the psychiatric bureau unless they had something to hide. They told agents who asked questions as much as possible in the shortest possible time. That was the best and quickest way to get rid of them.

"I was told the man wasn't very like you, sir, but the girl was exactly like you." He turned to Maureen. "This girl is a brunette, though. I wonder if you'd come down to the department for a couple of minutes. We'd like to test your hair, for example. If you're a natural blonde, why —"

"I'm not," Maureen laughed. "A lot of blondes aren't. Who is



"Now that's enough, John. Our guests aren't interested in your old voodoo hobby."

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this girl, and what's she done?"

"Mirune Kirk, from Chago. I believe you only checked in here yesterday. Now —"

Fool, fool, fool, the Savage told himself bitterly. How could he ever have thought he could escape? Yet, he *would* escape, another, more resilient part of his mind insisted. He almost had Maureen. He wouldn't, couldn't give her up. He would stop running and fight. He should have done that long ago.

The psychiatric bureau man's attention was all on Maureen. The Savage brought the heavy base of a table lamp crashing behind his ear. "Quick," he said. "Let's —"

Maureen was crying. Not bitterly, but miserably, despairingly.

"Just a little longer," she said between sobs. "Almost through. Why did you have to lose your nerve?"

"Lose my nerve?" he exclaimed — but she turned and ran from the room.

Perhaps the bureau man wasn't unconscious. Perhaps there had been others with him. The Savage never really knew. But there was sudden blackness which was somehow familiar.

They didn't even let him go back with Maureen. The next he knew he was in his bedroom at the museum in Chago — in bed, weak and dizzy from drugs.

The Scientist — his name was Tom Borden, but his face was the first the Savage remembered seeing, and he always thought of him as just the Scientist — was there, sympathetic as ever. Things didn't look quite real to the Savage, but he knew they were real.

"What a pity," said the Scientist. "What a terrible pity." He seemed aware of the inadequacy of his words, and clicked his tongue tragically. "The escape from here — but that's an old story. You went to Mirune with a trust that was really fine. You didn't hesitate over giving her a chance to betray you. And when you felt responsibility for her; oh yes, that was new. You wanted her to be sure. You needn't have worried so much about the sadism trauma; you were trying to tear it out by the roots. Your frank, conscious realization that you loved Maureen . . ."

He sighed. The Savage tried hard to clear the fog from his brain. "Did I understand you to hint," he asked in a voice that seemed to be speaking in the next room, "that you knew all along what was happening — and that something like this has happened before?"

"Oh yes," said the Scientist. "You might have guessed that, when I told you there would be no primitive mate for you it was because we intended you to have full citizenship of this world —

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eventually. May be a while yet," he added absently. "You start with a clean slate each time. Which means you don't automatically start where you left off. You're in a process of forgetting now, of course."

It was true. His attention directed to it, the Savage was aware of the impressions slipping off his mind, like chalk marks being washed away by rain.

"So I'm not really telling you anything," said the Scientist. "I'd put it all more carefully if I were."

"Maureen," said the Savage sharply. "Has she been in it all the time? Or was she new? Did she know? Will it be Maureen again? Have I —"

"Even if I did answer those, you wouldn't remember. I shouldn't really talk at all. Only so much more for you to forget. But some of it was so magnificent. . . ."

He sighed again.

The Savage spoke no more. It was only recent events which were crumbling away. He still remembered the early days. God, hadn't he been afraid and resentful and ashamed and angry and reckless and deceitful then! Perhaps it was steady progress, not just a clean sheet every time. He didn't understand it all. The Scientist hadn't said enough. He wasn't quite sure what was real and how real. But he did know that a lot had to happen to the Savage he had once been before he could take and deserve his place in this world.

At the end he ignored the Scientist, ceased trying to understand, and clung only to the memory of Maureen, the girl he was going to remember always — always — always. "Do I have to go down on my knees?" The hotel bedroom. "Can't you speak, Savage?" Slacks and wings, brown body; dark hair, blonde hair. Maureen. Could it be that she would come and see him again in his cage, and that even if he remembered nothing, he would know? "Why, you talk just like us!" A beautiful laugh, a laugh he loved. Maureen. He prayed to the Scientist, to himself, to Maureen, to the psychiatric bureau, whoever was responsible for his rehabilitation, that it would be Maureen again.

What did Maureen look like, anyway? For a moment he had thought her real name was Mirune. The drugs were dragging the last dregs of memory out of him. He was forgetting whom he had loved.

But he still remembered *that* he had loved.

~

It's probably hot as hell in hell, at that. Scientists estimate now that the temperature in the Earth's interior is around 9,000 degrees F.

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Illustrator: Virgil Finlay

ROOT OF EVIL

By SHIRLEY JACKSON

Need money? Unpaid bills fill your mail box? Have collectors built a bomb shelter on your lawn? Does your salary check have all the elasticity of an ersatz girdle?

If so, don't despair. There's a sure way out. Consult the classified pages of your local newspaper. Somewhere down among the fine print, look for one of John Anderson's advertisements. It may be under Miscellaneous — although Business Opportunities would be a lot more accurate. . . .

No other writer can dig into the human mind quite as well as Shirley Jackson. Those of you who remember her The Lottery, in The New Yorker *magazine, will find this bit of satire equally as scathing.*

MISS SYBIL TURNER opened the envelope and took out the enclosure, glanced at it, started to set it down on a pile of similar notes, and then took it back and glanced at it again; then she giggled. "Listen to this, Mabe," she said, and her friend Mabel Johnson, working at a similar desk, but typing at the moment, said, "Wait a minute," and finished her line before looking up. "What?" she said.

Sybil Turner was still holding the letter. "Listen," she said. "Here's a guy wants us to run an ad for money."

Mabel laughed shortly. "*That's* no way to get it," she said, looking down again at her typewriter. "Better he should go to work."

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"No, *listen*. He says, 'Money to give away' and he's got a post office box to write to and two dollars enclosed for the ad to run all week, and everything. Can you imagine?"

"He must be crazy," said Mabel Johnson.

"Crazy is *it*," Sybil Turner agreed devoutly.

"Here's something funny," Mr. George Carter commented to his wife the next evening. He was quietly reading his evening paper and his wife was doing needlepoint; they sat peacefully in front of their living-room fire with the children sound asleep upstairs. "Here's a real good one," George Carter said again, and his wife looked up patiently. "'Money to give away,'" George Carter read, once he was sure he had her attention. "Right here in the paper. People think of the screwiest things."

"But so many people are taken in by a thing like that," Mrs. Carter said in her soft voice. "People writing to him, hoping."

"Paper has no right to print a thing like that," George Carter said.

Mrs. Carter started to speak and then paused, her eyes lifted to the ceiling and her mouth open, listening. Then, reassured, she looked again at her husband and said, "Probably they run a thing like that to test how many people read the classified ads. Wouldn't that be it?"

Mr. Carter was obviously sorry that he had not thought of this himself. "Maybe so," he said grudgingly. "Wish they'd send some of that money along to us, though. *We* could use it."

"Oh, dear," Mrs. Carter agreed with a sigh. "With prices the way they are, and meat. . . ." She dropped her scissors onto the arm of the chair, folded her hands in her lap, and sighed again. "George," she demanded, as one who begins a long and intricate story, "just try to guess what they had the nerve to ask for lamb today? *Lamb!*"

"Things are pretty bad." Mr. Carter hastily elevated the paper before his face. "Screwiest idea I ever heard," he muttered.

"The fact is perfectly plain," Mrs. Harmon said severely to her daughter. "Your own mother's sewing, weeks and weeks of work, isn't good enough for you to wear out in public. So you can go without."

"Without clothes?" said Mildred sullenly.

"You know *perfectly* well what I mean. You picked out the style of this dress yourself and I spent three weeks making it and it looks just beautiful on you and —"

"I *didn't* pick out the style," Mildred said.

Her mother sighed. "I sometimes think you are the *most* un-

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reasonable —" she said.

"I wanted the dress in the *store*," Mildred wailed. "Not for you to *copy* it."

Her mother took a deep breath, as of one determined to be reasonable in spite of everything. "Dresses in the store cost money," she said. "This dress cost less than —"

"If I only *had* some *money*," Mildred said hopelessly. "I'll write to this guy in the paper says he's giving money away. I'll get *married* or something." She tossed her head defiantly. "*Then* I can have dresses."

Mrs. Harmon shifted her ground abruptly and began to cry. "Three weeks I took to make that dress," she said mournfully, "and now it's not good enough for you and you want to run away and get married, and all these years I've tried to keep you looking nice and worked to buy pretty things and spent three weeks —"

"Oh, *Mother*," said Mildred. She blinked to keep tears out of her own eyes. "I'm not going to get married, *honestly*. And the dress is *beautiful*. I'll *wear* it, honestly I will, I'll wear it all the *time*."

"It's no good," her mother said. "I know all the other girls —"

"It's *beautiful*," Mildred said. "It's just like the one in the store and it's the prettiest dress I ever saw, and I'm going to put it on right *now*."

Mrs. Harmon lifted her face briefly from her handkerchief. "Watch out for that pin I left in the shoulder," she said.

"For the last time I seem to find it necessary to say," Helen Nelson said emphatically, "that I do not desire to go to any movie."

"But —"

"Indeed I do not," Helen said. She set her shoulders and looked extraordinarily stern. "Movies last night," she said. "Movies the night before. I'm so tired of going to movies I don't know what to do. And anyway, there's nothing left to see."

"But Helen —"

"*Some* girls," said Helen pointedly, "like to go to the theatre. *Some* girls like to go to a night club and dance. *Some* girls even like to ride in taxis and wear gardenias. Of course *I'm* always happy at the movies though. Good old Helen."

"I can't afford —"

"*That* point," said Helen delicately, "is the one I was too polite to refer to. Let me just remark, however, that I know of only one person who has not got enough initiative to get out and *do* something for himself. He works heart and soul for this organization and comes around every week and says 'Thank you' to them so gratefully for — what is it they pay you? Seventeen cents a week?"

"Now listen —"

"*Some* men are making good

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money at twenty-four. *Some* men have good jobs and *they're* not afraid to assert themselves and keep up with other people and not let everyone else get ahead of them and *their* girls don't go to movies every night in the week and see the same old —"

"But when I've worked there a little —"

"And *some* men," Helen continued icily, "do not expect girls to wait around until they are sixty-five and drawing old-age pensions before they can get married."

"Well, to hear you talk —"

"Here," said Helen in her sweetest voice, "perhaps *this* will help you. Here, in the classified section of tonight's paper. Perhaps *this* is the lucky break you've been waiting for. Let me just give you this copy of tonight's paper, since I am sure it would take your entire weekly earnings to buy one for yourself."

"You don't have to talk like —"

"And now good-night," said Helen graciously.

"He shouldn't of done it, that's all," said Donald Hart, who was fifteen years old and felt utterly responsible for his mother and ten-year-old brother. "He's going to get us all in trouble, that's what."

"Dickie," said his mother, "tell me again what happened."

"I wrote the man like I said," Dickie told her. He looked nervously from his mother to his brother. "I didn't think he'd *answer*," he said, his voice trembling. "I never thought he'd *answer*."

"I'm afraid we ought to send it back to him," his mother said. She had tight hold of the bill and twisted it between her fingers as though afraid to set it down.

"Well, *we* haven't really done anything," Donald said. "Maybe we ought to tell the cops."

"No, no," said his mother hastily. "That's the *most* important thing of all. We're not going to tell *any*body, you hear? Donald?"

"Okay," said Donald, "but maybe he's a gangster or —"

"Dickie, you hear me?"

"Yes, but suppose they catch us?"

"We haven't *done* anything," his mother said again. "I don't even know if it's any good. *I* don't dare take a five-hundred-dollar bill into the bank and ask them if it's any good."

"Counterfeit," said Donald wisely.

"But what if it isn't?" said his mother. "Suppose it's a good bill?" She sighed, and looked down at the bill. "They have our address, of course."

"I had to put the address in for him to know where to send the money," Dickie said miserably.

His mother reached a sudden decision. "I'll tell you what we'll do," she said. "We'll put it right in Dickie's penny bank. Then, if

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they come and ask us about it, we can say we just put it away for safekeeping. And if no one comes after a while, why, I guess it's ours. But don't *tell* anyone."

"Don't you tell, Dickie," his brother said warningly.

"Don't *you* tell."

"*You're* the one always blabs out everything."

"*I* was the one thought of writing him in the first place, wasn't I?"

"And look what you got us into."

"Boys," said their mother warningly. "We've got enough trouble without you quarrelling. Now, Dickie, there's one more thing I want you to do."

"What?"

"Just in case it *is* all right," his mother said, "I want you to sit right down and write that man a nice letter saying thank you."

"Oh, *Mother.*"

"No one is ever going to say my boys weren't brought up right," she said firmly.

Mr. John Anderson let himself into his apartment, carrying his mail, and sighed deeply as he closed the door behind him. He was hungry, and tired, and his day had gone badly. He had succeeded in persuading a newsboy to accept ten dollars, and he had slipped a hundred-dollar bill into the cup of a blind beggar, but otherwise he had had no success at all. He winced when he remembered the way the truck driver had spoken to him, and the thought of the giggling shopgirls made him almost ill.

He took off his coat and sat down wearily in the easy chair. In a few minutes he would take care of the mail and then have a shower and dress and go out to some nice restaurant for dinner; he would take a vacation for this evening and carry only enough to take care of his own expenses. He could not decide whether to take a taxi uptown to the fine steak house, or to go to the seafood restaurant nearby and have a lobster. Lobster, he rather thought.

After he had rested for a minute, he went to the desk and turned over the mail he had brought home with him. Absently, he stared at the stacks of ten-dollar bills in the pigeonholes of the desk, the fives, the fifties, the five-hundreds. The mail under his hand was typical — one offensively humorous request for a million dollars, badly written in capital letters and unfortunately including no return address; one circular from a loan company featuring on the envelope a man pointing and the statement "YOU need no longer worry about money." One terse note from the newspaper saying that his week was up today, and asking if he desired to continue his ad. One

(*Continued on page 162*)

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Illustrator: L. R. Summers

A STAR FALLS ON

BROADWAY

By HARRY FLETCHER

THE old man got up from his chair, stood there swaying slightly for a moment, then walked slowly toward his wife. She opened her eyes and smiled up at him. Trembling hand grasping the back of her chair, the old man bent down and kissed her.

"Goodbye, my dear . . . and thank you."

No one in the audience stirred; no one coughed; no one whispered. All were aware that they were witnessing something more than a mere simulation of a character in a play. That feeble, drooping, shaking old man there on the stage, with his cracked, quavering voice. Was he, in reality, under pencilled wrinkles and white wig, a handsome, vibrant young man of twenty-six? Nonsense! No, there were limits. Not even the great John Iddington . . .

As with most, if not all, geniuses, John Iddington's prodigious talents became evident very early. It is told, though this need not be believed, that at the age of four, having somehow procured all the necessary properties including a pair of stilts, John, in his father's absence, presented himself — *disguised as his own father* — to his unsuspecting mother.

You can imagine, if you choose to accept the story, the expression on the mother's face when, at sound of a heavy tread, she looked up and beheld, standing there in

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the doorway of the living room, staring at them with open mouth, the letter-perfect twin of the "husband" who sat nonchalantly in the chair opposite her.

This, if it actually happened, was the first of a long and unending series of impersonations, which astonished all who witnessed or heard of them.

His professional career more than fulfilled the glittering promise of his amateur days. His first stellar role, his first really prominent appearance, which occurred at the age of fourteen, was in the role of Cyrano de Bergerac.

The boy was a master; he could handle much more exacting parts. It is comparatively easy for a child-actor to play a character older than himself; a much tougher proposition is the impersonation of a child younger than himself. It is told — and this, too, rather puts a strain on the credulity — that the boy repeatedly brought the house down with his characterizations: first of a child of three; next of a child of two; and finally of an infant, a girl infant at that, in swaddling clothes. He was heard at this period to bewail the fact that no vehicle existed, or was ever likely to exist, which contained in its Cast of Characters an unborn babe.

And so the years sped, the great Thespian passing from one triumph to another; the critics raving and swearing in unanimity that the summit of Art had been scaled.

Now, those same critics, intently watching the old man on the stage, sat there and wondered.

"Goodbye, my dear," the old man said, ". . . and thank you." He turned, totteringly, back toward his easy-chair.

The curtain began a slow descent as the old man, throwing out his arms, staggered and fell to the floor — obviously dead.

The audience, without exception, rose to its feet and thundered applause such as had never before been heard under those century-old rafters.

The curtain stayed down.

The doctor said softly, "He's dead." Then, suddenly, a startled look came into his eyes.

"Good God!" he muttered.

The players and stage-hands crowded closer, and gasped as the doctor raised Iddington's hand.

It was shrivelled up and scrawny, claw-like — an old man's hand.

The physician stared hard at Iddington's face; and then, slowly, he lifted the white wig.

John Iddington's face, beneath the makeup, was deeplined and dried up. His hair was white.

Later examination showed that his internal organs had undergone the degenerative processes associated with senility.

John Iddington's art had reached perfection.

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BY POUL ANDERSON

THREE WISHES

Nowadays it seems almost indecent to be happy. Psychiatrists do a land-office business, ulcers are a dime a dozen, and the long face has become as common as the short beer. That's why it's especially rewarding to meet a man like Papa Himmelschoen. Life had been good to Papa. True, he had too little money and too many years. Still, there were many friends and enough customers and the chance to help his neighbors. Then came the day he did one good deed too many. . . .

This, we'd better warn you, is a story with a Moral. We run one every so often because some readers don't feel right about plowing through a lot of words that add up to nothing but entertainment. So, if you want a Great Truth pointed out through the medium of fiction, this one is particularly for you.

PAPA HIMMELSCHOEN got the little statue quite by accident. He had fixed a pair of pants for Mrs. Polanyi's youngest son, and before she could pay him, her husband lost his job. When she told Papa about it and asked how she could make it up to him, he smiled and spread his hands and told her to forget the bill.

"Ach, so liddle a ting it iss," he said. "Let it be a fafor from vun neighbor to anudder."

"But we are not your neighbors," said Mrs. Polanyi. She was tall and straight and dark, and spoke English better than most people thereabouts, in spite of being from Hungary or some such outlandish place. "We live two blocks down."

"Vell, ve are all neighbors on de goot green eart," said

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Illustrator: Dick Francis

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Papa Himmelschoen. There was not a blade of grass for miles, only sidewalks and tenements, and the hot air smelt of gasoline and garlic. But he liked to talk that way. "Forget it, pleasse."

"No," said Mrs. Polanyi. "In spite of all they say about the Romany folk, we do pay our debts, for good or ill. And since we may have to move away soon looking for work, I will pay you the only way I can." So she brought him the statue. Soon afterward her family did go, and Papa never heard of them again.

The statue was sure a pretty little thing, and it must have been very old. It was bronze, and green with many hundred years. It. No — *she*. You could not be thinking of that tiny laughing girl with the wings on her shoulders as anything but she. Papa set her up on his bench and got much pleasure from looking at her now and then while he worked. But then, Papa got pleasure from everything. Maybe he was the only really happy man in the world.

But he had much to be happy about. It isn't everyone who can come over as a scared hungry little kid and end up as the best custom tailor in town. Maybe everybody didn't know Himmelschoen was the best, but enough people knew it to keep him busy at the work he liked. And his Martha was a fine woman — the best of wives — always cheerful like himself and a cook for angels. Their kids were all doing well too. Herman had come back from the war with lots of medals and had started a booming used-car business, and Esther was married to a good boy and had given them a fat little rascal of a grandson, and Morris was at the University doing something big in physics and all the time getting his name in the papers. Yes, life had been good to Papa Himmelschoen.

So it happened one morning that he came down into the shop from the upstairs flat where he and Martha lived, full of her fine breakfast and glad with all the world. "Goot morning, goot morning, goot morning!" he cried to the shears and the sewing machine and the bolts of cloth. "A happy goot morning to all!" And as a ray of sunshine came dustily in and touched his little bronze girl: "Und goot morning to you too!" And he picked her up and kissed her, so good was he feeling.

"Yipe!" cried Papa Himmelschoen, and let her go. For all of a sudden there was a warm wiggling thing in his hand, like a puppy dog maybe. And when his fingers opened, the little girl flew out and perched on the counter. Only she wasn't bronze any more, she was live flesh and blood, with little sparkles of light dusted over her wings. A real live fairy!

She yawned and stretched her-

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self, and her voice was like little fiddles and bells. "Oh my, I've slept a long time!"

"Who iss you?" asked Papa, getting up nerve.

"Oh, I am Iulia," she answered, curtsying very prettily. "Morgan le Fay was angered with me and condemned me to sleep in the form of a bronze statue until the Happy Prince kissed me and brought me back to life." She looked him up and down and her face got puzzled. "But are you a prince?"

"No, no, liddle lady, I am chust old Himmelschoen," he said, keeping his eyes away and not calling Martha down to look at this. Because a statue without clothes on is one thing, but a live girl in the same is another, and he was an old married man.

"Pleasse," he said, taking out his handkerchief, "do you mind wrapping dis around your . . . uh . . . around you?"

"Why in Faerie should I do that?" asked Iulia.

"Vell — dey dress different now," said Papa Himmelschoen.

"As you wish, my deliverer," said she, and tucked the handkerchief around her middle.

"No, no, a liddle higher up too, if you pleasse," begged Papa. "Up around de — de lungs too."

"I can't," said Iulia, after trying. "My wings get in the way." So she sat down, dangling her feet over the edge of the counter, and looked at him instead. "I never thought the Happy Prince would be thus," she murmured. "Have you no royal blood at all?"

"I am chust a common old man," said Papa. "But I am happy, efen if you are not dressing qvite de vay I like ladies in my shop should dress."

"But you must be a prince!" cried Iulia. "Just a moment, I will look into your time line if you don't mind — a few centuries back — "

"You vill *not!*" said Papa firmly. "Undecent enough you are already!"

But Iulia had already done it. She nodded and smiled. "Quite all right," she said. "I notice descent from several Electors of Brandenburg by their mistresses, from Frederick Barbarossa by a girl he met at an inn, from Charlemagne by fifteen different — "

"Shtop! Shtop!" cried Papa, as close to anger as he ever got. "First my shop you run around like it vas a bating beach only more so, den you defame my ancestors, und vot now?"

"Now I must get back to Faerie," said Iulia. "It's been such a long time!" She paused as she was standing up, with her wings shimmering like a small rainbow. "Oh! I almost forgot! My deliverer gets three wishes."

"Tree vishes?" asked Papa. Just like a fairy story yet!

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"That's right. The rules, you know."

"No, I do not know."

"Now you do. What are your wishes?"

"Vy . . . vy . . . " Papa scratched his bald head. "Vy, I don't know, liddle lady. I got all a man needs. Now, you chust run along und forget it, no?"

"But I have to give you three wishes!" cried Iulia. "It's in the rules. Oberon will be furious if I don't. He'll put me on toad-stool patrol for a hundred years."

"Oh, vell, in dot case," said Papa. "Let me see now. De vorld iss not so happy like it should be for many poor peoples, so —"

"Can't grant wishes to or for anyone but you yourself," said Iulia quickly. "The rules don't allow it. Anyway, I have only so much strength, you know."

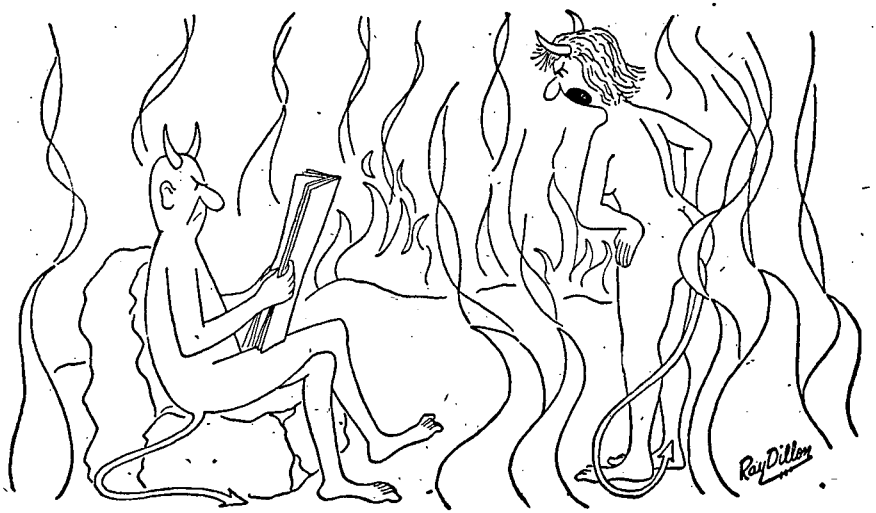
"But I don't need nutting for mineself!" said Papa. "I got goot vork, my vife is de best cook in de vorld, my kids is all grown up und doing vell, ve all haff healt und enough money. Vot more are ve vanting? You are tinking I am John D. Rockenheimer, maybe?"

"You have to wish!" wailed Iulia. She was close to tears.

"But I don't vant to vish!" cried Papa.

"Please," begged Iulia. "For my sake. Just to help me, won't you take a pot of gold?"

"No," said Papa. "Vit gold I am not vanting nutting to do. It iss unlawful to haff gold anyvay. Und too much money makes trouble by de income tax. I should sit



"Go where?"

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up all night filling out ten miles of forms?"

"Maybe you want to be young and strong and handsome again?" purred Iulia.

"Ach, no!" cried Papa in horror. "I am young again, vot vould my wife say? Vot are my customers saying, who iss dis young schlemiel moving in und taking Himmelschoen's shop, vill ve do business vit him? No! Und my old chess-playing friends, ven I come up und vant a game dey vill laugh und say I am crazy in de head, a baby like me should be vanting to play vit experts. No, I like my own age, tank you chust de same."

"Travel!" suggested Iulia. "Adventure! The glamor of the mysterious Orient!"

"No, tank you," said Papa firmly. "I am so seasick coming ofer I am not vanting to set foot on so much as a rowboat in all my days. Efery summer Martha und I take two veeks up by Danbury, vere ve haff friends und a comfortable place to stay. I should sleep on de ground yet vit lions und tigers und tom-toms prowling around? Nefer!"

"But I have to give you three wishes!" sobbed Iulia.

She looked so pretty and unhappy, dabbing at her eyes with a corner of Papa's handkerchief, that he was glad when he found the answer. "Nefer you mind, liddle lady, I vill haff my vishes," he said grandly, with a broad smile.

"You will?" Right away Iulia was sparkling with happiness and throwing off showers of rainbows from her wings. "Oh, thank you, my Prince! What is your first wish?"

"Vell," said Papa proudly, for it was a fine plan he had gotten, "I vish I had tree tings to vish for."

"Your wish is granted," said Iulia, too excited to stop and think.

All at once, Papa did remember three things he wanted. It had never bothered him before, but suddenly he knew that his shiny head was sort of funny and he would like a little more hair on it. And he hadn't thought of Rodtstein's Beer for years, since you couldn't get it any more, but now he remembered that it was the best beer in the world. And yes, there was that bragging old fool Hyman down at the club who always beat him at chess and talked about it, he would like to put Hyman in his place.

Good! Fine! What more than those three wishes did a man need?

"I am first vanting a goot head of hair," said Papa.

Iulia giggled and waved her hand. All at once his scalp felt funny. He went over to the mirror and, horror, three feet long

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and red as fire the hair was coming out on top.

"Not so!" he bellowed. "Vite, und like a man, not a dustmop!"

Iulia magicked him his hair the way he wanted it. "Chust a little closer around der edges," he said, "und take a liddle off der top. Ah, dere it iss."

"And now what is your desire?" asked Iulia.

"Now, a big barrel vit Rodtstein's Beer, vot dey don't make any more but iss de best beer in de vorld. Lager, pleasse."

So a huge keg appeared out of nowhere, and when he tapped it it was the beer of his dreams. Maybe Martha wouldn't like it, him having this barrel and right in the shop, but a man needs one weakness anyway.

"Ach, wunderbar!" said Papa Himmelschoen. "Und now —"

"That makes three wishes, I think," said Iulia, and her eyes got wide as she saw what had happened. But it was too late, and fairies do not go feeling sorry when they have all the gossip of many hundred years to catch up on.

"Vot?" cried Papa. "Vy, I haff only vished for —"

"First you wished for three things to wish for — remember? Then the hair and the beer makes three." Iulia stretched herself, trembling like a bird with eagerness. "Now, goodbye, Happy Prince, and fortune walk with you all your days."

"But you can't leafe me like dis!" wailed Papa. "Before, I am so happy nutting iss wrong. Now I am vishing for vun ting only you can giff me. It ain't fair! I made de vishes only to help you!"

"I'd like to give you one more wish, really I would," said Iulia. "But I'm only allowed three." She pouted with thinking. "I have only one suggestion. Morgan le Fay always was short-tempered and must have turned many other fairies into bronze statues. If you can find another . . ." She laughed and flew up and kissed him on his forehead. "Now, goodbye, my Prince!"

And she was gone.

Papa groaned and tapped a glass of Rodtstein's Beer.

So if you see a little old man haunting pawnshops, especially those in Hungarian neighborhoods, and looking wistfully at all the dusty statuettes in the place — that is Papa Himmelschoen, searching for the only way in the world to checkmate that bragger Hyman.

NOTE to the Federal Housing Authority: Maybe there's a solution after all. Estimates show that if all the people in the world moved to Brazil, they would have as much space as the people in England have right now.

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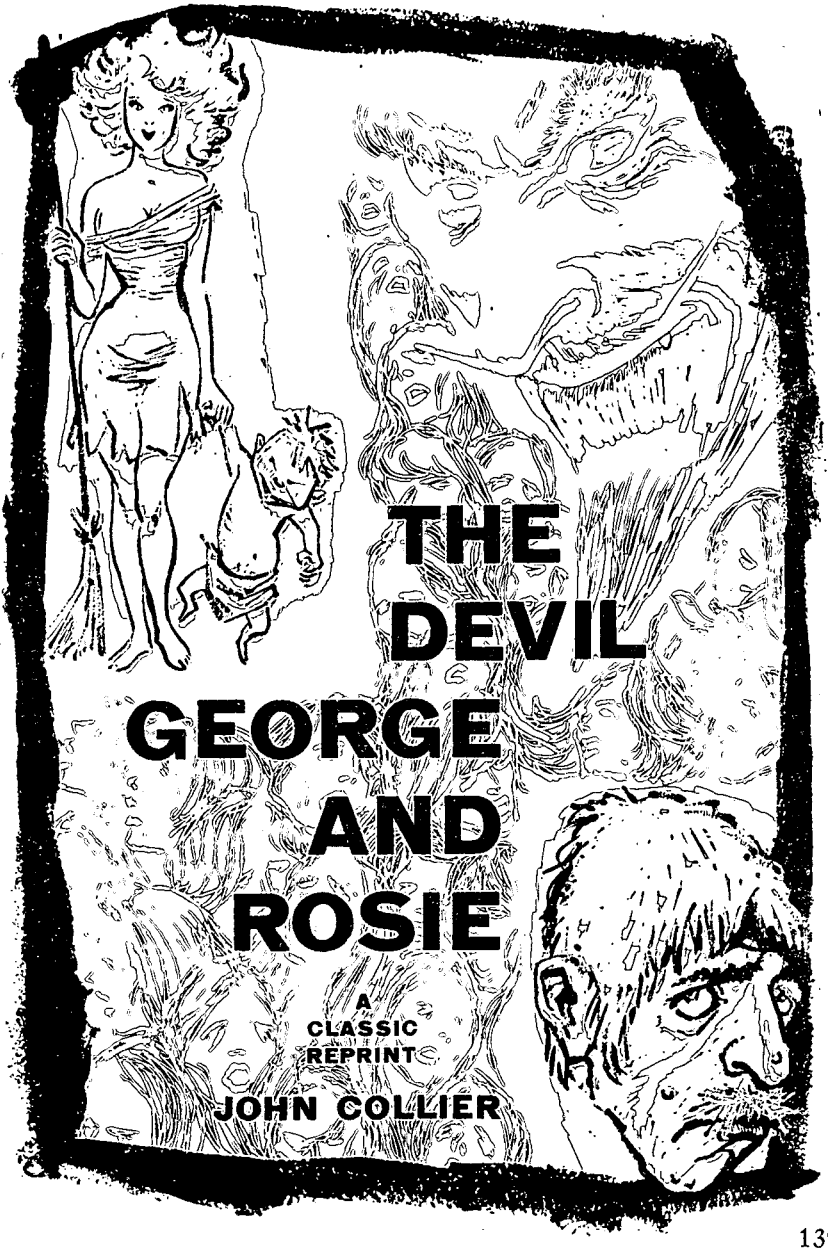

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THE DEVIL GEORGE AND ROSIE

It seems a great pity that Mark Twain wasn't able to stick around this mortal coil long enough to read the stories of the one man who is most able to fill his literary shoes. We mean, of course, John Collier, an Englishman with a masterful gift for uninhibited humor and a strong impulse toward outright blasphemy. Of him, Time *has made the pungent analysis: "[He] is as crazy as a hoot owl. But perched on the gnarled limb of satire, he blinks down with dry wisdom at a world much crazier than he."*

We are proud to present here John Collier at his best.

THERE was a young man who was invariably spurned by the girls, not because he smelt at all bad, but because he happened to be as ugly as a monkey. He had a good heart, but this soured it, and though he would grudgingly admit that the female kind were very agreeable in shape, size, and texture, he thought that in all other respects they were the most stupid, blind, perverse, and ill-natured bitches that had ever infested the earth.

He expressed this view very forcefully, and on all possible occasions. One evening he was holding forth to a circle of his cronies: it was in the Horseshoe Bar, at the bottom of the Tottenham Court Road. He could not help noticing that his remarks attracted the interest of a smart and saturnine individual seated at

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the next table, who had the rather repulsive look of a detective dressed up in evening clothes for the purpose of spying on a night-club.

Our friend was in no wise abashed by this scrutiny, but continued to say exactly what girls were, and what they did whenever they got the chance. He, who had least evidence for it of any man in the world, seemed to think they were unduly inclined to lasciviousness. "Or else," said he, "in the other extreme, they are mercenary prudes, or sadistical Dianas, whose delight it is to kindle the fires of Hell in a man's bosom and elsewhere, and triumphantly to describe his agonies to their little friends. I speak of the fires of Hell — I wish they existed in reality, so that these harpies and teasers might be sent there, and I myself would go willingly, if only I could watch them frizzle and fry."

With that, he got up and went home. You may imagine his astonishment, when he had climbed the high stairs to his poor student's room, to find the dark and cynical stranger, who had been watching him in the bar, now standing very much at his ease upon the hearth-rug. At the very first glance, he realized this was none other than the Devil himself, in whom for many years he had had no belief at all. "I cannot easily describe," said that worthy, with the easy air of a man of the world, "the pleasure it gives me to meet one of such insight and intelligence as Mr. George Postlethwaite."

George made several sorts of protest, but the Devil smiled and bowed like an ambassador. In the end he had buttered up George to some effect, and carried him off to supper in a little restaurant in Jermyn Street. It must be admitted, he stood a superb bottle of wine.

"I was vastly intrigued," said he, "by the views I heard you expressing earlier this evening. Possibly, of course, they were born of a mere passing petulance, pique, wounded vanity — call it what you will."

"The devil take me if they were!" cried George.

"Splendid!" said his companion. "We are getting on like a house on fire. Now, my dear chap, my little difficulty is this. The domain over which I have the honour and pleasure to preside was designed originally on the most ample scale, but, nevertheless, certain recent tendencies are fast rendering its confines too narrow, and its supervision too onerous, for one who is not as young as he was."

"Sorry to hear that," said George.

"I could cope with the increase of the population of this planet,"

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said the Devil. "I might have coped even with the emancipation of women. But unfortunately the two are connected, and form a vicious circle —"

"I see exactly what you mean," said George.

"I wish I had never invented that particular sin," said the Devil. "I do indeed. There are a thousand million women in the world at this moment, and, with one or two negligible exceptions, every single one of them is damned."

"Fine!" said George.

"Very fine indeed," said the Devil, "from the artistic point of view. But consider the pressure on space, and the ceaseless strain of organization."

"Squeeze 'em in!" cried George with enthusiasm. "Pack 'em tight. That's what I say."

"They would then imagine themselves at a party," replied his new friend, "and that would never do. No, no. Everyone who comes to me must have individual attention. I intend to open a new department. The site is chosen. The builders are at work. All I need is a superintendent of iron personality."

"I should like to know a little about the climate, salary, and prospects," said George, in a business-like tone.

"The climate, much like that of Oxford Street on a summer afternoon," replied the Devil. "The salary is power, and the prospects are infinite. But if you are interested, my dear fellow, allow me to show you over the place. In any case, I should value your opinion on it."

No sooner said than done. They sank into the bowels of the earth, and came out in a suburb of Sydney, N.S.W.

"Here we are, then!" cried George.

"No, no," said the Devil. "Just a little farther on."

They proceeded with the speed of rockets to the northeast corner of the universe, which George now perceived to be shaped exactly like a pint of beer, in which the nebulae were the ascending bubbles. He observed with alarm a pair of enormous lips approaching the upper rim of our space. "Do not be alarmed," said the Devil. "That is a young medical student called Prior, who has failed his exam three times in succession. However, it will be twenty million billion light years before his lips reach the glass, for a young woman is fixing him with her eye, and by the time he drinks all the bubbles will be gone, and all will be flat and stale."

"Poor fellow!" cried our hero. "Damn these women!"

"Do not pity him," said the Devil very tolerantly. "This is his fifth pint, and he is already as

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drunk as a lord, and closing time draws near. What's more, our destination is at hand."

George saw that they were nearing what is sometimes called a "fish" in this considerable pint of beer. As they approached it, he saw it was a dark star of gigantic proportions, about which circled a satellite many hundred times larger than the earth.

"That satellite," said his conductor, "is the spot I am proposing to colonize with my new department. We will go straight there, if you have no objection."

George assenting, they landed in a sterile and saturnine country, close by a palace of black basalt, which covered about a square mile of ground.

"That's a snug-looking box!" observed our hero.

"Merely a pioneer's hut," said his companion. "My future overseer will have to rough it there until something better can be fixed up for him."

George, however, noticed a prodigious number of barrels being run down into a cellar on the hinder side of this palace. What's more, he saw several groups of fiends, who should have been at their work, squatting in one of the unfinished galleries, with cards in their hands.

"You actually play poker here?" said he, in tones of the liveliest satisfaction.

"We are connoisseurs of every pleasure," replied the Devil, with a smile. "And when we play cards, everyone has an excellent hand."

He showed George a number of masterly pictures; some of them were a little indecent. There were also very splendid kitchens, already staffed with cooks; kennels, stables, falconries, gun rooms, music rooms, grand halls, little cosy rooms, rooms devoted to every sort of pastime, and gardens laid out rather like those of Versailles, only very much larger. There was a whole cellar full of fireworks of every description. Not only these, but there were a number of other delights, of a nature entirely new to the visitor. There was an observatory, for example, from which the behaviour of any young woman in the world could be closely inspected. "This is really a very interesting device," murmured our hero.

"Come!" said the fiend. "We must not stay here all day. Doubtless you will want to see the rest of your domain."

"Yes, indeed," said George. "Show me where the prisoners are to be confined. I suppose that now and then I can have one hauled up for special admonishment."

The Devil then flew with him over the whole surface of the planet, which, once they were

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clear of the palace and its lands, proved to have an aspect not unlike that of the Great West Road, where it approaches London. On every hand, rows of cells were being run up. To add the final refinement of misery, they were designed exactly like houses in a modern building project. Imitation husbands, who could neither speak nor hear, were planted in armchairs with their feet on the mantelpieces. The wardrobes were full of unfashionable garments. Small imps disguised as children were already rehearsing by dozens in all the upper rooms. The peculiar property of the walls was to translate the noise of those next door into the sound of a party going on, while the windows were so designed as to make the dowdiest passer-by appear to be arrayed in the very latest mode.

Vast bunion factories belched smoke among the crazy villas; lorry-loads of superfluous hair clattered along the streets. George was shown the towering gasometers of the halitosis works, and a number of other things I do not dare imagine. He saw a great concourse of fiends being instructed in door-to-door salesmanship; others were being fitted out as relations-in-law, rent-collectors, and bailiffs. He himself made two suggestions that were immediately put into force: one was for a stocking ladderer, and the other for an elastic that would break in the middle of any crowded thoroughfare.

As a final encouragement, the Devil took him over to the mainland of Hell itself, which is girdled by the Styx as Saturn by his ring. Charon's vast liner had just come to dock, and our hero had the pleasure of seeing a multitude of film stars, baby blondes, unfaithful wives, disobedient daughters, frivolous typists, lazy servingmaids, wantons, careless waitresses, cruel charmers, naggers, sirens, clogs, unpunctual sweethearts, bridge-playing grandmas, extravagant helpmeets, mischief-making gossips, tantalizers, female novelists, crazy debutantes, possessive mothers, neglectful mothers, modern mothers, unmarried mothers, would-be, should-be, in fact all who could be, mothers; they were all there, as naked as your hand, and they filed down the gangway, some weeping, some brazen, and some in attitudes of affected modesty.

"This is a magnificent sight," remarked our hero.

"Well, my dear sir," said the Devil, "are you the man for the job?"

"I will do my best!" cried George enthusiastically.

They shook hands on it. All the little details were arranged. Before evening George was installed as principal vassal of all the

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Devil's host, and overlord of a planet populated only by women and fiends.

It must be admitted he enjoyed himself with a vengeance. Every day he would go out, having donned his cap of invisibility, and regale himself upon his subjects' endeavours to cope with the hardships he had designed for them. Sometimes he would hold up the ceaseless self-dirtying of plates, put the children to sleep, and amuse them with the prospect of a matinee. He saw to it, though, that they had to queue up for the cheap seats, and arranged for it to rain. In the end, he would announce that the show was postponed.

He had a thousand other ways of tantalizing them; I shall not enumerate them all. One of the best was to send for any newly arrived young thing who was reported to be vain of her beauty, and give her the impression for an hour or two that she had made a conquest of him, and then (as far as was possible) undeceive her.

When the day's work was done, he sat down to cards with his principal officers, and sure enough everyone had a good hand, but his was the best. They drank like champions; the Devil was constantly sending over the choicest delicacies from Hell; the word "fine" was continually upon our hero's lips, and the time passed like lightning.

One day, toward the end of the second year, our potentate had just got through his levee, and was refreshing himself with a stroll on a little private terrace which he much affected, when word was brought to him that the senior port official desired an audience. Our hero was the easiest fellow in the world to approach, never stood upon his dignity: "Send the old chap along here," said he. "And, hi! Bring a bottle and a couple of glasses back with you when you come."

The fact is, George dearly loved a chat with these old petty officers, who occasionally brought him reports of diverting little incidents at the Ellis Island of Hell, or scraps of gossip concerning the irrelevant affairs of the world, such as sometimes strayed in among Charon's cargo, as lizards or butterflies travel to Covent Garden among the bananas.

On this occasion, however, the harbour-master's face bore an extremely worried expression. "I'm afraid, sir," he said, "I've got a little irregularity to report."

"Well, we all make mistakes sometimes," said George. "What's the trouble?"

"It's like this here, sir," replied the old salt. "Young gal come along o' the last cargo — seems as if she didn't ought to be here at all."

"Oh, that'll be all right," cried George. "Bound to be. It's under-

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stood we take the whole issue in these days. She's a woman, and that's enough. What's on her charge-sheet, anyway?"

"Lot o' little things, sir, what don't amount to much," replied the honest fellow. "Fact is, sir, it ain't added up." And he pursed his lips.

"Not added up?" cried George in amazement.

"That's how it is, sir," said his subordinate glumly. "This young gal *ain't properly dead.*"

George was absolutely bowled over. "*Whew!*" said he. "But this is serious, my man."

"It *is* serious, sir," said the old chap. "I don't know what's to be done, I'm sure."

A score of fine legal points were involved. George dispatched an S.O.S. for one of the leading casuists of Hell proper. Unfortunately, they were all engaged in committee, on some fine point concerning an illuminated address which was being prepared for the saviours of Germany. George therefore had nothing but precedent to go on, and precedent made it clear that a mortal must sin in such and such a way, die in such and such a condition, be checked in, checked out — it was as complicated as a case in Court Leet under a Statute of Ed. Tert. Rex., that statute being based on precedents from the Saxon and Norman codes dually and differently derived from a Roman adaptation of a Graeco-Egyptian principle influenced prehistorically by rites and customs from the basin of the Euphrates or the Indus. It was quite like an income-tax form. George scratched his head in despair.

What made it all the worse was, the Devil himself had given him a most serious warning against the least infringement of protocol. "This is," he had said, "little better than mandated territory. We have built up step by step, and with incredible ingenuity, a system under which we live very tolerably, but we have only done it by sailing devilishly near the metaphysical wind. One single step beyond the strict legal limits, and I am back on my red-hot throne, in that pit whose bottomlessness I shall heartily envy. As for you —"

George, therefore, had every incentive to caution. He turned over a large number of volumes, tapped his teeth: in the end he knew not what to make of it. "Send the young person in to me," said he.

When she arrived, she proved to be no more than seventeen years of age. I should be telling a downright lie if I said she was less beautiful than a peri.

George was not a bad fellow at heart. Like most of us, he was capable of tyranny upon the fea-

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tureless mass, but when he came to grips with an individual his bark was a good deal worse than his bite. Most of the young women he had had up for admonishment had complained of little except his fickleness.

This young girl was ushered into his presence; the very lackeys who brought her in rolled their eyes till the whites flickered like the Eddystone Lighthouse. She was complete in every particular, and all of the highest quality; she was a picture gallery, an anthology of the poets, a precipitation of all that has ever been dreamed of love: her goodly eyes like Saphyres shining bright, her forehead yvory white, her cheeks lyke apples which the sun hath rudded, her lips lyke cherryes charming men to byte, her brest lyke to a bowle of creame uncrudded, her paps lyke lyllies budded, her snowie neck lyke to a marble towre; and all her body like a pallace fayre, ascending up, with many a stately stayre, to honours seat and chastities sweet bowre.

Her name was Rosie Dixon. Moreover, she gained enormously in contrast to her surroundings, by the mere fact of being alive. It was as though a cowslip were to bloom miraculously between the dark and sterile metals of the Underground; as if its scent were wafted to one's nostrils on the nasty, sultry, canned sirocco of that region. It is no exaggeration to say that she was as good as she was beautiful. It is true her pretty face was a little blubbered with tears. "My dear," said George, taking her hand, "there is no reason for you to cry in that fashion. Don't you know the good old saying, 'Never holler before you're hurt'?"

"Pray, sir," cried she, having taken a long dewy peep at his monkey-phiz, and seeing a vast amount of good nature there. "Pray, sir," said she, "tell me only, where am I?"

"Why, in Hell, to be sure," said he, with a hearty laugh.

"Oh, thank goodness!" cried she. "I thought I was in Buenos Aires."

"Most of 'em think that," said our hero, "owing to the liner. But I must say you are the first who has shown any gratification on learning otherwise."

They had a little more conversation of this sort; he questioned her pretty closely as to how she came to be stowed away on Charon's vessel. It appeared that she was a shopgirl who had been much tormented by her workmates; why, she could not say. However, she had to serve a young man who came in to buy some stockings for his sister. This young man had addressed to her a remark that brought her soul fluttering to her lips. At that very moment, the cruellest of her en-

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vious colleagues had manoeuvred to pass behind her, and had bestowed on her a pinch so spiteful, so sudden, and so intensely and laceratingly agonizing, that her poised soul was jolted from its perch. It had spread its wings and borne off her swooning body as a woodcock bears off its young. When she had regained her senses, she was locked in one of the narrow staterooms of a vast ship, stewarded by what she took to be black men, and resounding with the hysterical laughter and screams of captives of her own sex, all of whom seemed to think they were on the way to Buenos Aires.

George was very thorough. He minutely examined what little evidence she had to offer. "There is no doubt," said he at length, speaking in tones of the greatest sympathy, "that you have received a very cruel pinch. When your tormentor comes into my hands, I myself will repay it a hundredfold."

"No, no," said she. "She did not mean so much harm. I'm sure she is a good girl at heart. It is just her little way."

George was overcome with admiration at this remark, which, however, caused a tremor to pass through the whole of the vast black palace. "Upon my word!" said he. "I can't keep you here. You will bring the whole place crashing about my ears. I dare not put you in one of our punishment cells, for, if I did so against your will, all our system of home rule would be snatched away from us, and we should return to the crude discomforts of primitive times. That would be intolerable. There is a museum over on the mainland that would make your blood run cold."

"Could you not send me back to earth," said she.

"No woman has ever left this place alone!" cried he in despair. "My position is so delicate I dare not make an innovation."

"Do not take on so," said she. "I cannot bear to think of so kind a gentleman being plunged into fiery torments. I will stay voluntarily, and perhaps then no fuss will be made. I hope it will not be terribly painful."

"You adorable creature!" cried he. "I must give you a kiss for that. I believe you have solved the difficulty."

She gave him back his kiss, as sweetly and purely as you can possibly imagine. "This is terrible," he cried in great anguish of spirit. "I cannot bear to think of you undergoing the miseries of this place. My dear, good girl —"

"I don't mind," said she. "I have worked in a shop in Oxford Street."

He gave her a pat or two, and signed up a form for her: "Re-

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manded in custody at own request."

"It is only temporary, after all," he said. "Otherwise I would not permit it."

Very well, she kept a stiff upper lip, and was carted off to a hateful box as cruelly equipped as any of the others. For a whole week George kept his head, reading love lyrics to distract his mind. At the end, he could put the matter behind him no longer. "I must go," said he, "and see how she is getting on."

In Hell, all the officials travel with incredible speed. In a very few minutes George had passed over a couple of continents, and was tapping at the mean front door of poor Rosie's little habitation. He had not chosen to put on his cap of fern-seed virtue, or perhaps he never thought of it. Anyway, she came to the door with three or four of the imps hanging about her apron-strings, and recognized him at once. He observed that she was wearing the drab and unfashionable garments provided by the authorities, in which her appearance was that of a rose in a jam-pot.

What raised an intolerable burden from his heart was the fact that the superfluous hair had obviously failed to take root upon her living flesh. He found on inquiry that she had used it to stuff a pillow with, which she had placed behind the head of the snoring imitation husband who gracelessly sprawled before the fire. She admitted a little tuft flourished on the bruise, where she had been pinched.

"No doubt it will fall off," said our hero scientifically, "when the tissues resume their normal condition. These things were designed to flourish upon carrion only, whereas you —" and he smacked his lips.

"I hope it will fall off," said she, "for scissors will not cut it. And since I promised some to the eldest of these toddlers, to make him a false mustache of, no more has arrived."

"Shall I try to cut it off?" said our hero.

"No, no," said she, with a blush. "He has stopped crying now. They were all very querulous when first I came here, but now they are improved out of all knowledge."

While she spoke, she busied her fingers with a succession of little tasks. "You seem to be terribly busy," complained George.

"Forgive me," said she, with a smile, "but there is such a terrible lot to do. Still, it makes the time pass."

"Do you never," said he, "wish to go to the matinee?"

"That would never do," she replied. "Supposing *he* should wake up" (pointing to the imitation husband) "and call for his

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tea. Besides, I have plenty of entertainment. The people next door seem always to have a party; it does me good to hear them laugh and sing. What's more, when I'm cleaning the windows, as needs doing rather often, I see girls going by, dressed more beautifully than you can possibly imagine. I love to see people in pretty clothes."

"Your own are not very attractive," said George in a melancholy tone.

"They are plain enough," said she, with a laugh. "But I'm far too busy to think about that. All I could wish is that they were of slightly stronger materials. The stockings laddered so often I've had to give up wearing them. And whenever I go out shopping — Still, you don't want to hear all this."

George was so devoured by remorse that he had not the spirit to ask an interesting question. "Goodbye," said he, pressing her hand.

She gave him the sweetest glance; he felt it no more than his duty to offer her an encouraging kiss. At once the doors began to bang, the fire belched smoke, the imps opened their mouths to yell.

"No, no," said she, with just so much of inexpressible regret as to soften the cruelty of it. And she pointed to the dummy husband before the fire.

"Don't worry about him!" cried our hero. "He's only a dummy." With that, he gave the image a kick, capsizing it into the hearth.

"Well, if he's not a real husband," said Rosie, "I suppose there is nothing wrong in it." And with that she gave George a kiss, which he found altogether delightful, except that, as it increased the high esteem in which he held her, so also it increased his misery in having placed her in such a predicament.

When he got home, the poor fellow could neither eat nor sleep. He called up a few of his officers to pass away the night at poker, but though he held four straight flushes in succession, he could take no pleasure in it. In the morning, the telephone bell rang. George's was the only instrument on the planet which did not go wrong as soon as one began to speak; on this occasion he would willingly have surrendered the advantage. The Devil was at the other end, and he was in a towering rage. He made no bones about accusing our hero of downright morality.

"You curse and swear very well," said the victim in an injured tone. "All the same, it was not my fault she came here. I clearly see she may prove a disintegrating influence if I keep her, but, if I may not send her

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back, I don't see what else I can do."

"Why, tempt her, you idiot!" replied the Devil. "Have you never tempted woman before?"

"As far as I know, no," said George frankly.

"Well, do so now," said the Devil in a quite silky tone, which nevertheless caused blue sparks to crackle from the instrument. "Once we get possession of her soul, there will not be much fuss made about her body. I leave the matter in your hands entirely. If you fail me, there are one or two ancient institutions over here which I shall take pleasure in reviving entirely for your benefit."

George detested the idea of tempting this singularly good and beautiful young girl; however, the prospect was not so unredeemedly repulsive as that of immersion in boiling brimstone. He took a glass or two, to stifle what regrets he had, and sent for Rosie to attend him in a silken pavilion, which he had had rigged up among the groves and fountains which surrounded his citadel. He considered this fabric to be preferable to blocks of black basalt, in the event of some disruptive phrase of hers bringing the roof about their ears.

It was not very long before she arrived, although it seemed so. Heaven knows how she preserved her radiant health in the nasty grey air of Hell's outer suburbs, but she looked fresh and bright as ever, and seemed to glow through her cheerless wrappings as a peach glows through tissue paper. Nevertheless, George was naturally a slow starter, especially when his conscience was involved. He certainly greeted her very warmly, but if all the scientists in the world had had these hugs and kisses in a test tube, they could not have separated one atom of sin out of them, for they were as simple and natural as could possibly be desired.

I admit the simple and natural is as good a beginning as any other. George, however, proceeded only to the offer of a cup of tea, which is not sinful except at the University. They began to chat; he was unable to resist telling her of his joys and sorrows in the neighbourhood of the Tottenham Court Road, and the reason for this was that he wished her to know everything about him. She herself was no less frank. It is impossible to describe the emotion with which George heard that she had become an orphan at the age of fourteen, and had since then lived with an old aunt, who was inclined to severity. The moments passed like flowers of that precious, edelweiss joy which blooms on the brink of the abyss.

The light began to fade; the

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warbling of blackbirds and thrushes now sank into a stillness from which soon arose the diviner strains of the nightingale. In this far, wild corner of the garden, the effect was a little Chinese, with a profusion of willow trees, which now turned blue in the dimming air. Our young people, seated at the entrance of the tent, found their tongues falling idle, and sat in a divine languor which, like another silence, a silence of the soul, permitted the first faint notes of a new music to become audible in their hearts.

Their fingers interlocked. The moon, which in those parts is of gigantic size, being no other than Hell itself, rose behind the shadowy trees. "They say," said Rosie in a dreamy voice, "that those marks on it are craters."

One person's dream may well be another's awakening. George was at once galvanized into activity. "Come," said he. "It is time we began dinner. It's my birthday, so there's lots of champagne."

He hoped by these words to inveigle the simple girl into making a feast of it. However, he started under a handicap, for he was already as drunk as a lord on the very sound of her voice. A man's true nature appears when he is in that condition: George was prepared to jeopardize his whole future for an amorous whim. His brain reeled under the onslaught of a legion of virtuous thoughts. He even conceived the notion of suggesting to the Devil that it should be the dummy husband who should be cast into the boiling brimstone, and that he should take the useless effigy's place, but from this act of madness the thought of the imps restrained him.

The remembrance of his master brought him back to Hell for a moment. "My dear," said he, patting her hand, "how would you like to be a film star?"

"Not at all," said she.

"What?" said he.

"Not at all," said she.

"Oh! said he. "Well! Well! Well!"

He had a diamond necklace in his pocket, ready to tempt her with, but could not restrain himself from hanging it unconditionally about her neck, he was so delighted by this answer of hers.

She was pleased, even more than by the gift itself, by the spirit in which it was given. She thought George the kindest and the best of men, and (whether it was the wine or not, I'll not say) she would have even stuck to it that he was handsome.

Altogether, the meal went off as merry as a marriage bell. The only drawback was that George could see no signs of a fitting sequel. Some would say the brim-

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stone was a sequel sufficiently appropriate, but that was not George's idea at all. In fact, when he had played all his cards in this half-hearted fashion, he was suddenly overcome by a hideous prevision of his fate, and could not repress a most alarming groan.

"What is it, my dear?" cried Rosie, in the tenderest of voices.

"Oh, nothing," said he, "nothing at all. Only that I shall burn forever if I fail to seduce you."

"That is what the young man said at the stocking counter," said she in dismay.

"But I mean, in brimstone," said he dolorously, "and that, I assure you, is altogether a different proposition from love, whatever the poets may say."

"You are right," said she, in a happier voice than seemed entirely fitting, "love is altogether different from brimstone," and with that she squeezed his hand.

"I fear it will give me no peace in which to remember you," said he, positively photographing her with his eyes.

"You shall not go there," said she.

"He said I must!" cried George.

"Not," said she, "if — if it will save you to —"

"To what?" cried George.

"To seduce me," faltered Rosie.

George protested very little; he was altogether carried away by the charming manner in which she expressed herself. He flung his arms about her, and endeavoured to convey, in one single kiss, all his gratitude for her kindness, his admiration for her beauty, his respect for her character, and his regret that she should have been orphaned at the age of fourteen and left to the care of an aunt who was a little inclined to severity. This is a great deal to be expressed in one single kiss; nevertheless, our hero did his best.

Next morning, he had to telephone his report to the Devil. "I'll hold your hand," said Rosie.

"Very well, my darling," said he. "I shall feel better so."

His call was put through like lightning. The Devil, like thunder, asked him how he had got on.

"The young woman is seduced," said George, in a rather brusque tone.

"Excellent!" returned his master. "Now tell me exactly how it happened."

"I thought," said George, "that you were supposed to be a gentleman."

"I am inquiring," said the Devil, "in a strictly professional capacity. What I wish to get at is her motive in yielding to your almost subtle charm."

"Why?" cried George. "You don't think that splendid girl would see me frizzling and frying in a lake of boiling brimstone?"

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Illustrator: David Stone

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"Do you mean to say," cried the Devil in a terrifying voice, "that she has sacrificed her virtue merely to save you from punishment?"

"What other inducement," asked our hero, "do you imagine would have been likely to prevail?"

"You besotted fool!" cried his master, and proceeded to abuse him ten times more roundly than before.

George listened in fear and rage. When he had done cursing him, the Devil continued in a calmer voice, "There is only one thing to be done," said he, "and you may consider yourself very fortunate that you (you worm!) are needed to play a part in it. Otherwise, you would be frizzling before sunset. As it is, I see I must give the matter my individual attention, and the first step is that you must marry the girl."

"By all means," replied our hero briskly.

"I shall send you a bishop to perform the ceremony," continued the fiend, "and next week, if I am better of my present fit of gout, I shall require you to present me to your wife, and I myself will undertake her temptation."

"Temptation to what?" asked George, in a tone of great anxiety.

"To that sin to which wives are peculiarly fitted," replied the Devil. "Does she like a waxed mustache?"

"Oh, dear! He says," whispered George to Rosie, "do you like a waxed mustache?"

"No, darling," said Rosie. "I like a bristly, sandy one, like yours."

"She says she likes a bristly, sandy one, like mine," said George, not entirely without complacency.

"Excellent! I will appear in one yet bristlier and sandier," replied the fiend. "Keep her by you. I have never failed yet. And, Postlethwaite —"

"Oh, yes, yes," said George. "What is it now?"

"Be discreet," said the Devil, in a menacing tone. "If she gets wind of my intentions, you shall be in the brimstone within an hour."

George hung up the receiver. "Excuse me, my dear," he said. "I really must go and think over what I have just heard."

He walked out among his groves of willows, which were then all freshened by the morning dew, and resounding with the songs of birds. It was, of all the mornings of his life, that on which he would most have appreciated his first cigarette, had it not been for his conversation with the Devil. As it was, he did not bother to light one. "The thing is," he said to himself, "he must

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either succeed or fail. In the latter case his fury will be intolerable; in the former case mine will be."

The problem seemed to defy solution, and so it would have done, had it not been that love, whose bemusing effects have been celebrated often enough in song and story, has another and an ungratefully neglected aspect, in which the mind receives the benefits of clarifying calm. When the first flurry of his perturbation had passed, our hero found himself in possession of a mind as cool and unclouded as the sea-strand sky of earliest dawn. He immediately lit his cigarette.

"After all, we have some days to go," he murmured, "and time is entirely relative. Consider, for example, that fellow Prior, who is at this very moment about to drink up the universe, and who will still be arrested in the act of doing so long after all our little lives have passed away. On the other hand, it is certainly not for me to deny that certain delightful moments can take on the aspect of eternity. Besides, we might always escape."

The thought had entered his mind as unostentatiously as, no doubt, the notion of writing *Paradise Lost* entered Milton's — "H'm, I'll write *Paradise Lost*." "Besides, we might always escape." Just a few words, which, however, made all the difference. All that remained, in one case as in the other, was to work out the little details.

Our hero was ingenious. What's more, he was assisted in his reflections by the hoarse cry, like that of a homing swan, of Charon's siren. It was the hour when that worthy, having cast loose from the quays of Hell, where he dropped his male cargo, turned his great ship towards George's planet. It came into sight, cleaving the morning blue, flashing in the beams of the local sun, leaving behind it a wake like that of a smoke-trailing aeroplane, only altogether better. It was a glorious sight. Soon George could see the women scampering up and down the decks, and hear their cry: "Is that Buenos Aires?"

He lost no time. Repairing to his palace, and seating himself in the most impressive of the salons, he sent forth a messenger to the docks, saying, "Bid the skipper come up and have a word with me."

Charon soon came stumping along in the wake of the messenger. He might have been inclined to grumble, but his eyes brightened at the sight of a bottle George had on his desk. This contained nothing less than the Old Original Rum of Hell, a liquor of the fieriest description, and now as rare as it is unappreciated.

"Skipper," said George, "you and I have got on well enough

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hitherto, I believe. I have to ask you a question, which may seem to reflect a little on your capacities. However, I don't ask it on my own behalf, you may be sure, and in order to show my private estimation of you as a friend, as a man, and above all as a sea-dog of the old school, I am going to ask you to do me the favour of taking a little tipple with me first."

Charon was a man of few words. "Aye! Aye!" said he.

George then poured out the rum. When Charon had wet his whistle, "The chief," said George, "is in a secret fury with you over Mrs. Soames of Bayswater."

"Avast," said Charon, with a frown.

"Has it slipped your memory that I mentioned her to you on two previous occasions?" continued our hero. "She is now a hundred and four, and as cross as two sticks. The chief wants to know why you have not brought her along months ago." As he spoke, he refilled Charon's glass.

"Avast," said that worthy again.

"Perhaps," said George, "among your manifold onerous duties, his express commands concerning one individual may have seemed unworthy of your attention. I'm sure I should have forgotten the matter altogether, had I such a job as yours. Still, you know what he is. He has been talking of changes at the Admiralty; however, pay no attention to that. I have to visit the earth myself on important business, and I find that the young woman you brought by such a regrettable mistake has had training as a hospital nurse. Between us, I assure you, we will shanghai the old geezer in a brace of shakes; the chief will find her here when he recovers from his gout, and foul weather between you will be entirely averted."

With that he poured the rest of the rum into the old salt's glass.

"Aye! Aye!" said that worthy.

George at once pressed the bell, and had Rosie ushered in, in a bewitching uniform. "To the ship, at once!" he cried.

"Aye! Aye!" cried Charon.

"I can take you back," whispered George to his beloved, "as long as you don't cast a glance behind you. If you do, we are lost."

"Depend upon me," she said. "I have too much to look forward to."

Very well, they got aboard. Charon believed all landlubbers were mad; moreover, he had long suspected machinations against him at headquarters, and was obliged to George for giving him word of them. George ordered a whole case of the admirable rum (the last case in existence) to be

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placed in his cabin, lest Charon should remember that old Mrs. Soames had never been mentioned to him at all.

Amid hoots and exclamations in technical language the great ship left her moorings. George, on the pretext that he had to maintain constant communication with his chief, took over the wireless operator's cabin. You may be sure Satan was in a fury when he heard what had happened; but the only effect of that was that his gouty members became a thousand times worse inflamed, and grew still more so when he found it impossible to establish communication with the ship.

The best he could do was to conjure up, in the trackless wastes of space, such dumb images as might tempt Rosie to glance behind her. A Paris hat would bob up like a buoy on the starboard bow, and a moment later (so great was the speed of the ship) be tossing far astern. On other occasions, the images of the most famous film actors would be descried sitting on the silver planets of far constellations, combing their hair. She was exposed to a hundred temptations of this sort, and, what was crueller, she was subjected, by pursuant imps, to ceaseless tweakings of the hair, tuggings of the garments, sensations as of a spider down her back, and to all sorts of odious familiarities, such as would be very offensive to describe! The devoted girl, holding fast to the forward rail of the boat-deck, never so much as flickered an eye.

The result of this devotion, coupled with George's vigilance at the earphones and Charon's drunkenness below, was that they soon heaved to in the latitudes of the earth. George and Rosie were set to slide at dizzy speed down an invisible rope, and they found themselves safely in bed beside the old centenarian, Mrs. Soames.

She was in a tearing rage when she found this young couple beside her. "Get out of here at once!" she cried.

"All right," they said, "we will."

The very next day I met them in Oxford Street, looking in the windows of the furniture shops, and George acquainted me with the whole story.

"And you say," said I, "that the universe is really a vast pint of beer?"

"Yes," said he. "It is all true. To prove it, I will show you the very place where Rosie was pinched by the envious young woman."

"The very place?" I cried.

"Yes," said he. "It was in that shop over there, at the counter to the right as you go in, just at the end of the stockings, and before the beginning of the lingerie."

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THE TOURISTS

By BILLY ROSE

While reading the papers lately, you've noticed that Billy Rose has come in for considerable mention. Most public figures do at one time or another. But what you may not know about him is that he's one of the world's most widely read authors, his syndicated column, Pitching Horseshoes, having appeared in more than 400 daily newspapers and 1800 weeklies, as well as 38 foreign-language publications.

Many of Mr. Rose's columns were widely reprinted, and deservedly so. For some reason, however, one of his best died, so far as we've been able to learn, with its first appearance. We're especially pleased to offer it to you in these pages.

A LADY who lives on Pine Avenue in Montreal recently sent me a story about two sisters. She asked me not to use their names and, as you will see, the request is reasonable enough. . . .

In 1912, a widower whom I shall call Henri Odette died and left a small legacy to his daughters who had been keeping house for him in Quebec. A week after the funeral, the sisters sat down to discuss their future.

"I'd like to travel," said Louise, the younger of the two, "and see some of the places we've been reading about."

"We haven't enough money for that," said Miriam.

That Spring, the girls rented a small store in a town on the Gaspé Peninsula and stocked it with general merchandise. And, in the course of the next few years, the attractive and enterprising sisters built it into the most popular

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trading post in that whole neck of the wilderness.

One day, a car with a Florida license pulled up and a couple of good-looking men came in to buy some canned goods. When they were gone, Louise said to her older sister, "Let's close down for a month this winter and go to Miami where it's warm. It might be fun to use some of that lipstick we have in stock."

"People would start trading elsewhere and forget us," said Miriam. . . .

A decade later, the store was many times its original size, and that year-end, when the sisters balanced their books, they found they had more money than they figured to be able to spend the rest of their lives.

"What's the point in making any more?" asked Louise. "Let's sell out and take a trip to California. And after that, maybe Mexico. Who knows? We might meet a couple of fellows we like and get married."

"Nobody would pay what the store is worth," said the elder sister.

The following year, however, a man from Halifax did offer to buy them out, but the deal fell through when Miriam insisted on a price more than ten times an average year's earnings. Whereupon the man opened a store a street away and, for the next five years, the girls worked the clock around to stand off his competition.

In 1938 their rival went out of business, and when the war boom started up the following year the sisters again enlarged the store to keep up with the demand.

One night two Januaries ago, Louise, now in her 50's, set out alone for home. While taking a short-cut across an icy field, she slipped and fractured her hip. No one heard her cries, and when a neighbor found her in the morning pneumonia had set in. Three days later, doctors and drugs notwithstanding, she was dead.

Miriam never went back to the store again, and her sister's funeral was the most elaborate ever seen in the Gaspé area — a bronze coffin protected the remains and a carved tombstone all the way from Vermont marked the final resting place.

But it turned out there was nothing final about it. That Spring Miriam made a strange request of the local authorities — she wanted permission to disinter Louise's body and move it to California. When permission was granted, the coffin was put on a special plane, and Miriam went along to supervise its reburial.

A few months later, with the help of an influential attorney, she got another disinterment permit. This time the coffin was shipped to Mexico City.

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Illustrator: Harry Garo

The last time my correspondent in Montreal heard of the old lady, she had snipped through the red tape and regulations of Mexico, and the bronze coffin was on its way to Havana. . . .

And that's all there is to this story, except it seems reasonable to assume that somewhere in the world today an uneasy coffin is resting in whatever happens to be the cemetery of the moment. And equally reasonable to assume that on a nearby hotel porch a rich old lady is rocking away, wondering what place her little sister would like to visit next.

STOP ON THE RED

(Continued from page 101)

crossing. Cars and trucks jammed every which way and Old Four-Square was still showing green both ways but the lights were sort of winking unsteadily.

Doc Nugget hopped out of the wrecked cab and started sprinting between cars toward the sidewalk, and it was then that Mr. Ladd realized that Doc was proving the case against himself by taking it on the lam. He still had that briefcase clutched in his hand, you see, and was in one heck of a hurry to get lost in the crowd.

But just then Old Four-Square — like a pitcher winning his own ball game, maybe, or maybe feeling right sorry that she gave Mr. Ladd such a rough time — fell off her perch. And whether her standard had been brushed by the truck, who's to say? There was never any visible mark on it. But Old Four landed ker-smack right on top of Doc Nugget and knocked him cold. And his briefcase cracked open and spilled sawbucks and C-notes and gilt-edge stocks and bonds all over the gutter — half a million bucks' worth, they counted.

Mr. Ladd got down there plenty fast and had the cops pinch Doc. But he took time out to give Old Four here a friendly pat. And in making over the story for the next edition, he gave the old girl credit for blocking Doc's getaway and saving a lot of widows and orphans from the poorhouse.

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As you can see, sir, Old Four got dented up pretty badly in that fall. And she was never any good after that — I mean, for anything except sentimental purposes. And when Mr. Ladd asked the city to give her to him for the club, they gladly obliged.

And Mr. Ladd, he didn't last much longer at *The Morning Post.* Not having her to depend on any more, you see . . . .

Another Manhattan, sir? Right away. And would you care to invest another buck in Old Four? Now, that's right nice.

SOMETHING FOR THE WOMAN

(Continued from page 73)

"Okay?"

She smiled and answered him with the word she always used. "Okay."

Then they were swept forward with the crowd, and the isolation vanished. From the habit of months and weeks and days she sought again for the panic.

But it had vanished also.

Strange, she thought. But then she knew, with a giddy sense of joy, that it was not strange at all. The panic had been replaced, shouldered out by something she had somehow allowed herself to forget. Something for the woman. The only thing, after all, to which the woman can cling. The thing that was formed when the woman was formed. Love.

She danced along with the crowd and heard Patty and Tom laughing, and now the ship loomed above them. She looked up into the bright sky against which a million spinning worlds were forever anchored. The solid, steel-riveted, eternal sky. She looked at the space ship and laughed.

Hello, you. Be a good monster and take us out to Mars.

ROOT OF EVIL

(Continued from page 129)

letter signed by three hundred children in the Roosevelt Grade School, saying thank you for the television set he had given the school. One postcard reading: "Dear Sir, If you really mean it please send ten dollars return mail." This last he answered, addressing the envelope quickly and enclosing, without counting, a handful of ten-dollar bills.

Then he sat down at the desk, looking with desperation and frustration at the stacks of money. Finally, in a fury, he took one of the piles of ten-dollar bills and threw it wildly against the opposite wall, where it hit and scattered until ten-dollar bills floated about the room.

"In the name of heaven," he wailed, "what am I going to *do* with it all?"

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